The story of the

sinclair ZX Spectrum

in pixels_

Chris Wilkins


sinclair

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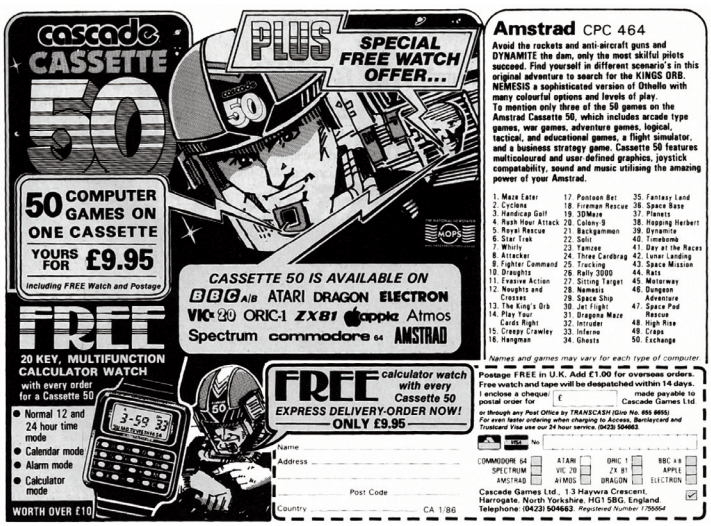




Graeme Mason

The shelf life of a computer game is limited - this was recognised very early on by games publishers who breathed new life into games by re-releasing them months later in compilations with other titles.

What's better than getting one game with your hard-earned pocket-money? How about getting five? Or ten? Or fifty? Unfortunately, the early days of the Spectrum saw games for the most part released in the singular, with the few compilations available generally featuring software of a lower quality. There can be no better example of this than the infamous *Cascade Cassette 50*, a collection of BASIC efforts so irredeemably awful that it inspired a modern-day competition to discover who can create the most dreadful and uninspiring game on the ZX Spectrum. *Cassette 50* and its peers were usually supplied mail-order, much like the majority of early Spectrum software; 1984, however, saw the games market change forever. Firstly, budget games began to appear, thanks chiefly to the formation of low-price kings Mastertronic. And secondly, a label known appropriately as Computer Records released a compilation of 12 games entitled *Select 1*. Unlike most previous compilations, *Select 1's* games had all been previously released by other software companies, and the idea came from videogames' more established fellow entertainment industry, music.

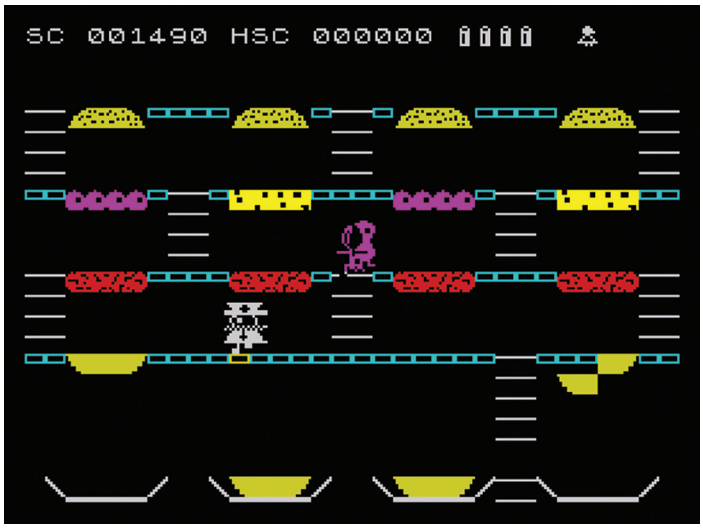


Cascade Cassette 50 - quantity over quality.

Computer Records was another name for Telstar, the famous record company that had been formed in 1982, and was the brainchild of Sean O'Brien and Neil Palmer. Noticing the similarities between the two industries, O'Brien and Palmer decided to have a crack at a videogame compilation with a new label name to try and convince gamers it wasn't just a quick cash in by the record company. Of course, Telstar didn't own any games and neither did they have the expertise or experience to create them, so it used the process that had

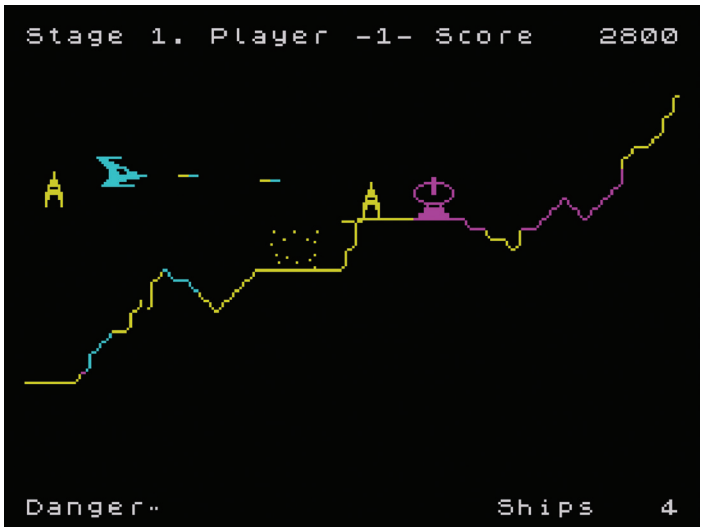
proven so successful with music: purchase the rights to titles from other publishers before bundling them all up in one, value-for-money package. And the Spectrum version of *Select 1*, while not containing a completely consistent level of quality, at least featured some famous names in Ocean's *Hunchback* and bizarre fast-food license *Mr Wimpy*, and best-sellers such as Quicksilva's *Timegate* and *Meteor Storm*.

Select 1 was a reasonable success and should have opened the floodgates; yet single games were still selling well, and most software houses saw no reason to dilute their income and venture into this untapped market. Fittingly, the next step came once more from the music industry, as two ex-K-Tel executives named Nigel Mason and Colin Ashby saw a large deluxe cardboard box-sized gap in the market. Named after their favourite tipple, Beau Jolly would go on to become the leader in multiple third-party games compilations on the Spectrum, although it began by distributing old Imagine Software individually before batching them up into collections of games called *Value Packs* in 1984. The following year Beau Jolly released its first 'true' compilations, featuring games from a variety of software houses. *Mega Hits* (which boasted an impressively cool comic book-style cover) was the more action-focussed, and lived up to its name. Leading the way was the technically astounding shoot 'em-up *3D Starstrike* and Microsphere's popular *Wheelie*. Wally Week's first outing, *Automania*, and more shooting action



in *Blade Alley* and Melbourne House's classic *Scramble* clone, *Penetrator*, rounded the package off. Meanwhile, *Mega Hits*' companion collection was the first in Beau Jolly's line entitled *10 Computer Hits*. This effort was more varied than its peer with mandatory shoot 'em-ups and action-adventures (*Project Future*, *Harrier Attack*, *Wriggler*) accompanied by platform games such as the iconic *Chuckie Egg*, a strategy game in Lothlorien's *Overlords*, a joystick waggler, Martech's *Brian*

Mr Wimpy - found in the *Select 1* compilation.



Penetrator, found in the *Mega Hits* compilation.



3D Tank Duel by Realtime Graphics - from the *Soft Aid* compilation.

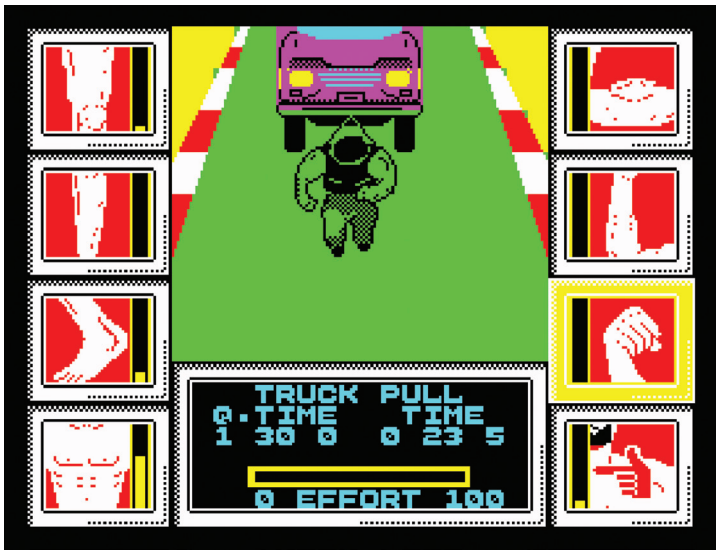
Jacks Superstar, and a graphic adventure game, *The Sorcerer Of Claymorgue Castle*. Another Microsphere game, *Skool Daze*, was possibly the most famous game on *Computer Hits*, although the whole compilation was of high quality, containing several critical and commercial hits.

The success of *Mega Hits* and *Computer Hits* finally compelled the software industry to take notice of the potential of compilations. But firstly, one man decided the concept could be used for a greater good, and in the process created a phenomenal hit. Rod Cousens CBE, then managing director of Quicksilva and driven by the efforts of Bob Geldof's Band Aid, rallied the software industry to donate games for a bumper compilation from which all profits would be given to the Ethiopian appeal. The result was *Soft Aid*, an assembly of ten popular Spectrum titles, mixing the odd creaking classic with more recent hits. Leading the way was Quicksilva itself with the iconic *Ant Attack* - other highlights included the *Battlezone* clone *3D Tank Duel* from Realtime Games; Elite's much-touted Jet Set Willy-beater, *Kokotoni Wilf*; The Edge's fast-paced *Starbike*; and of course that Spectrum superstar himself (or should that be 'itself'), Horace in *Horace Goes Skiing*. *Soft Aid* was an outstanding success, remaining in the software charts for many months, no doubt helped by the worthy cause and a well-judged price tag of just £4.99. It was rumoured to have earned an almighty £350,000 for the appeal, a sum that no doubt raised many an eyebrow within the industry. The numbers could no longer be ignored - the age of the compilation was upon us.

The major publishers were predictably first on the scene as they realised they could invigorate and monetise their back catalogue thus gaining vital development



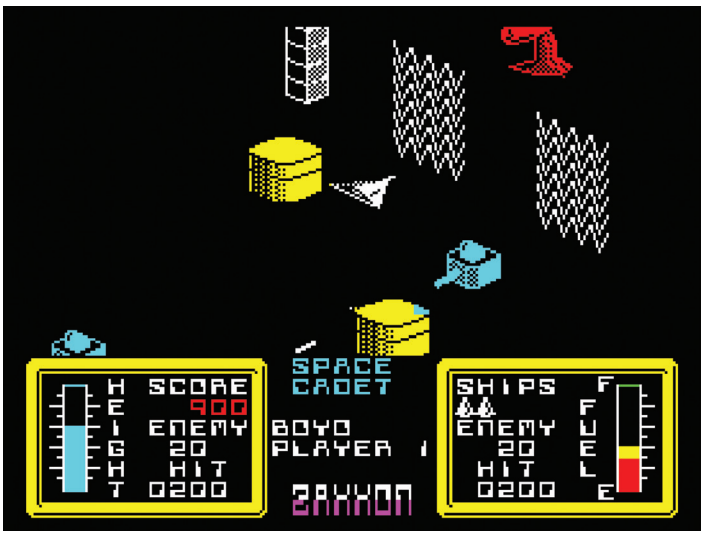
Starbike by The Edge, found in the *Soft Aid* compilation.



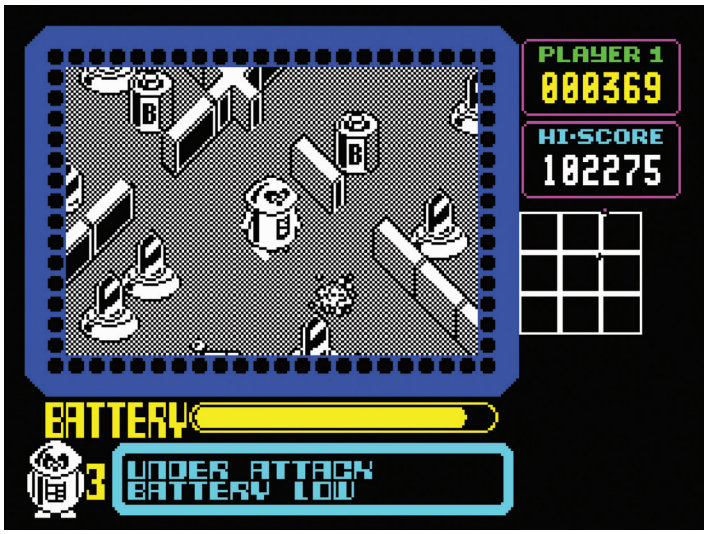
Geoff Capes Strongman, found in the *Computer Hits* compilation.

funds. Themed compilations were common; Gremlin Graphics assembled collections of four games that had gained the prestigious 'Crash Smash' status in the popular magazine, inevitably creating compendiums of superior quality in the process. Meanwhile Ocean also invented its own hook with *They Sold A Million*, four games that were not just critically acclaimed but also huge commercial successes. The first of these included a quartet of smash hits that easily justified the effusive epithet – who could argue that *Jet Set Willy*, *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*, *Sabre Wulf* and *Beach-Head* didn't represent silly value for money at a cost of just £9.99? These releases still contained games from other publishers and had so far utilised the common double plastic cassette box. As the trend towards bigger boxes began, compilations were destined to become a natural home for what many would call 'chocolate box syndrome'.

Pioneers Beau Jolly were still releasing their regular *10 Computer Hits* compilations to varying degrees of success. Volume 3 from 1987 was a nadir, containing creaking and inferior titles such as *Show Jumping*, *Give My Regards To Broad Street* and *Geoff Capes Strongman*, while the next set, released later the same year, not only comprised excellent games such as *Starquake*, *Contact Sam Cruise* and *Deactivators*, but also offered a brace of bonus games in the form of Electric Dreams' *Dandy* and *Spindizzy*. Ocean's big rival, US Gold, had already begun releasing its own famous back catalogue in large impressive boxes. *The Gold Collection* series had begun excitedly with *Beach-Head*, *Spy Hunter*, *Tapper*, *Zaxxon*, *Blue Max* and *Buck Rogers: Planet Of Zoom*. As the quality of its games began to wane in the late Eighties, so did



Zaxxon from US Gold's *The Gold Collection*.



Martianoids, released in Volume 3 of *The Gold Collection*.

the standard of the *Gold Collections*, with volume 3 from 1987 (which contained major flops such as *Leviathan*, *Martianoids* and the *Psi 5 Trading Company*) proving to be the last in that particular series. Of much better standard for US Gold was *Gold, Silver, Bronze* which collated three of Epyx's excellent Olympic simulations in *Summer Games*, *Summer Games II* and *Winter Games*. Later in the same year saw *History In The Making* which housed 15 of US Gold's hits.

As the software houses had realised the value of their own back catalogues, companies such as Beau Jolly began to struggle, relying on relationships such as Nigel Mason's rapport with Electric Dreams' Rod Cousens, to fill out their compilations. Virgin Games, observing the success of Beau Jolly, released several Now compilations (riding on the success of its best-selling music compilations) starting in 1985 and concluding three years later with *Now Games 5*. Beau Jolly themselves combated the difficulty in getting decent titles by releasing larger compilations such as 1989's *30 Red Hot Hits* which despite the impressive number, included mainly older or budget games. Despite Beau Jolly's efforts, however, one company, however, had already established itself as the 'King' of the compilation – Ocean Software.

As mentioned earlier, Ocean's *They Sold A Million* range was successful although dependent on games from other publishers, in particular US Gold (who at that point were still in partnership with Ocean). As one of the forerunners of the UK software industry, Ocean created an enviable back catalogue that lent itself well to the compilation model. After low-key endeavours *Stars On The 128K* and various shop bundle collections, 1987 proved to be the year the Manchester publisher really

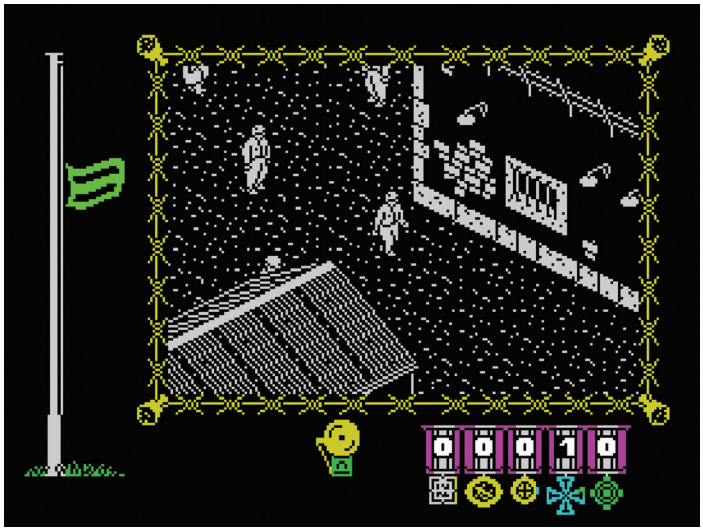


Kat Trap, released in *Now Games 5* by Virgin.

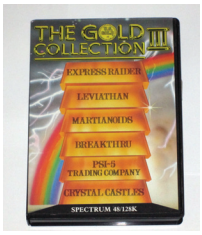
earned its crown. First up was *Live Ammo*, a set of five games that were inevitably violent in tone. Strangely, Ocean also released *The Magnificent Seven* shortly after *Live Ammo*, and the septet (which was actually an octet thanks to 'free' extra game *Yie Ar Kung-Fu*) eclipsed its cousin thanks to a line-up that many claim resulted in the greatest ever Spectrum compilation. And indeed there is hardly a misstep in *The Mag 7's* roster: critical and commercial hits abound in *Wizball*, *Head Over Heels*, *Cobra*, *Frankie Goes To Hollywood* and *The Great Escape* backed up with *Arkanoid* and *Short Circuit.* In terms of gameplay-to-outlay ratio, it had no peer. The sporting-themed *Game, Set And Match*, also released around Christmas 1987, was another superb collection of games and with all three released in over-sized cardboard boxes, there was no doubt that Ocean dominated both the shelves and sales over that festive season.

From this point on, Ocean continued to use catchy phrases (*The In Crowd*, *We Are The Champions*) to promote its compilations, but like all Spectrum software, sales began to shrink as the end of the Eighties approached. Hamstrung by the fact that many of the better games had sold so well that most Spectrum owners already owned them plus the incredible rise of budget games, and more pertinently the budget re-issue market, the golden era began to fade.

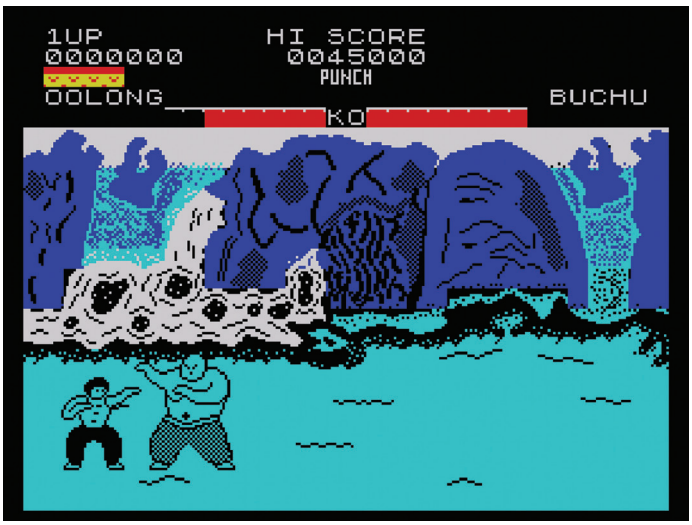
But for those of us lucky enough to have experienced the thrill of seeing an advert for the latest Spectrum compilation or the glossy cardboard box itself dominating a shop shelf at Christmas time, nothing will ever replace that feeling that you were getting not only great value for money, but also some superb games into the deal as well.



The Great Escape, found in *The Magnificent Seven.*



The Gold Collection III, released by US Gold in 1987.



Yie Ar Kung-Fu - the free extra game, making *The Magnificent Seven* actually Eight.

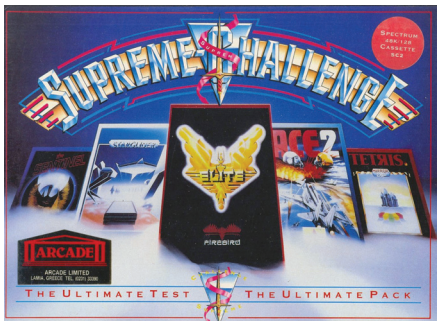
TOP FOUR COMPILATIONS



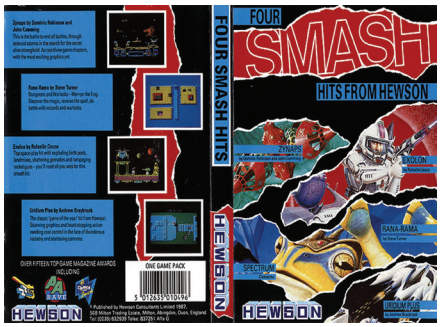
Magnificent by name, magnificent by contents. The sheer amount of quality on display was incredible, and many of its games were also recent releases. A great collection.



The original and the best. Ultimate's *Alien 8* rubs an angular shoulder with Gargoyle's expansive *Dun Darach*, arcade conversion *Spy Hunter* and shoot 'em up *Night Gunner*.



It may have 'only' contained five games, but what a five. Rainbird's glorious *Starglider*, Firebird's classic *Elite* and T*he Sentinel*, backed up with famous puzzler *Tetris* and *ACE 2*.



Hewson's quality was high enough that smaller collections such as this were still great value. It contained three shooters (*Exolon*, *Zynaps* and *Uridium*) and the excellent *Ranarama*.



THE ARCADE COMPILATION OF THE YEAR

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COIN-OP Hits















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RASTAN The Warrior King. Lands that produce men of legend, dragon slayers, be in no shadow – guardians of evil fear him. For believing people, the war for minds as well as high living. Status of the art programming makes a true translation of the Arcade for your home micro, enjoy superb graphics and realistic action as RASTAN comes on a world of dangers – magical wizards, fire breathing, lions, bats, snakes, skeletons and finally the living dead. Is it more than you can handle?

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SLAP FIGHT You are the pilot of the Stealfighter and more destroy the evil alien backing which confronts you, wave after deadly wave on the most hostile planet of Orac. To survive, in your challenge collect icons and subsidiarily increase your fire power and speed. Superb graphics and split second timing give this game an addictive edge.

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RENEGADE #RENEGADE# is the code name given to the super-agent who is about to enter the world of the vigilante street gang who have kidnapped his girlfriend. There is a place to visit, no time to think – but look sharp – there is always time to die! From the city subways to the gangland ghettos you will always encounter the gangsters of evil who's mission it is to exterminate the only person on earth who dares to throw down the gauntlet on their path – the Renegade. PLAY RENEGADE. PLAY #RENEGADE#

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ARKANOID The ultimate test of the ultimate player. After the mothership "Arkanoid" was destroyed, a space craft "Vaus" succeeded away only to be trapped in the void – you control the Vaus and have to penetrate 32 levels and then confront the "Doh" Emperor Changer" – can you outwit, outplay in order to reverse time and resurrect the "Arkanoid." Frantic action and slight time and timing combine to produce the most addictive and competitive game.









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FLYING SHARK HOT FROM THE ARCADES. Flying Shark is the definitive conversion of this shoot 'em up, chart topping classic by Taito. Devise your strategy as you fool beating of enemy planes, tanks, gun emplacements and choose from some craft as you bomb, blast and battle your way into arcade history.

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ARKANOID REVENGE OF DOH Eons have passed, yet Arkanoid has returned in the original ARKANOID game. Dimension controlling force "DOH" has come back to life, and occupying the huge space craft ZARD, has ordered his diminion ARKANOID from space fighter #VAUS# runs through long forgotten computer data cores in finally the ultimate battle. Result – Who's? It's been tried and tested with knowledge the devastating power & speed of, before it can initiate its revenge. "The Revenge of Doh"

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BUBBLE BOBBLE Bubble Bobble is a #ARCADE# hit of #1987#. Meet Bub and Bob, two of the bravest dinosaurs you ever saw, as they battle their way across 100 levels of completely chaotic universe of their own making. Jump around picking up goodies and secret weapons as you seek to outsmart your enemies. But beware. Hang around too long and you'll face Baron von Blubba from where there's no escape!

© TAITO CORP

LEGEND OF KAGE Legend has it that long ago in Japan the beautiful Princess Kiri was kidnapped by the evil Iga ninja King, and Kage, a young ninja who was walking with her in the forest at the time, was given the formidable task of rescuing her. The most help Kage will get is good enough, the forest is the Dragon King's palace, guarded by his ninja guards.

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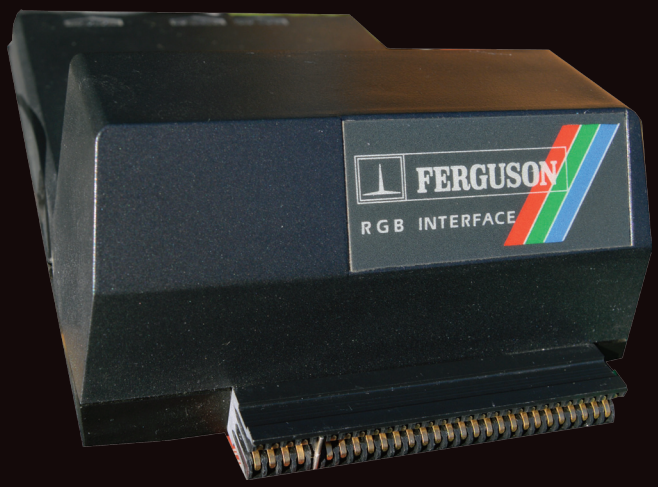
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THE PERIPHERALS

Kempston Score Board

This arcade joystick was released by Kempston in 1985 and is as close as a Spectrum gamer could get to the 'arcade feel' in the comfort of the home at the time. Extremely rare - if you see one in your local charity shop then make sure you pick it up.



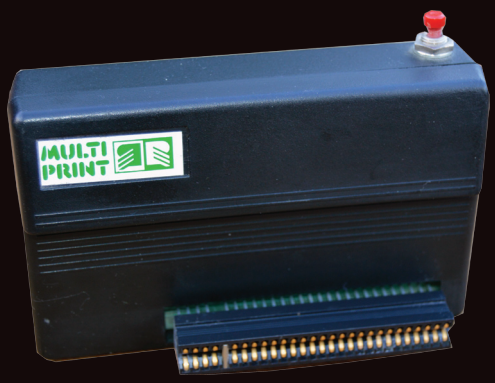


Ferguson RGB Interface

A device that allows the Spectrum to be connected to Ferguson's own monitors and TVs giving a clear and sharp RGB picture with sound.

Romantic Robot MULTI PRINT

The MULTIPRINT allows the range of Spectrum computers to be connected to a Centronics printer including dot matrix and daisy wheel models printing up to 255 characters per line.





Defender Light Gun

A number of plastic guns came to market for the ZX Spectrum that allowed the player to shoot objects moving across the TV screen. This is an example produced by Cheetah and came boxed with *Bronx Street Cop* and *Billy the Kid*.



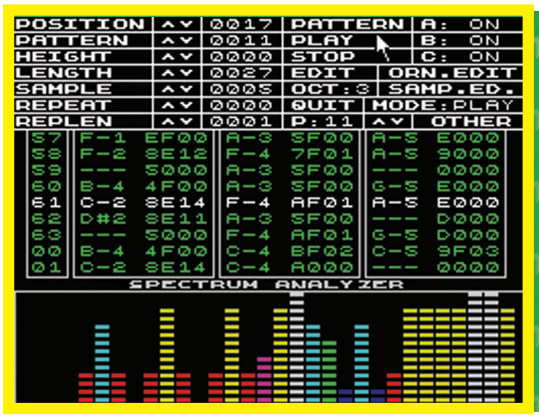
WHSMITH Computer Data Recorder

This WHSMITH cassette player was one of the most popular with those who wanted a trusted, reliable device to load games from and save developed items to. Somewhat iconic in appearance.

MIKRO-PLUS

The device that saw the ultimate demise of Mikro-Gen - *Shadow of the Unicorn* was their latest game and used this peripheral to give the Spectrum, and the game, an extra 16K to use. The game was lack-lustre and expensive and failed to impress.

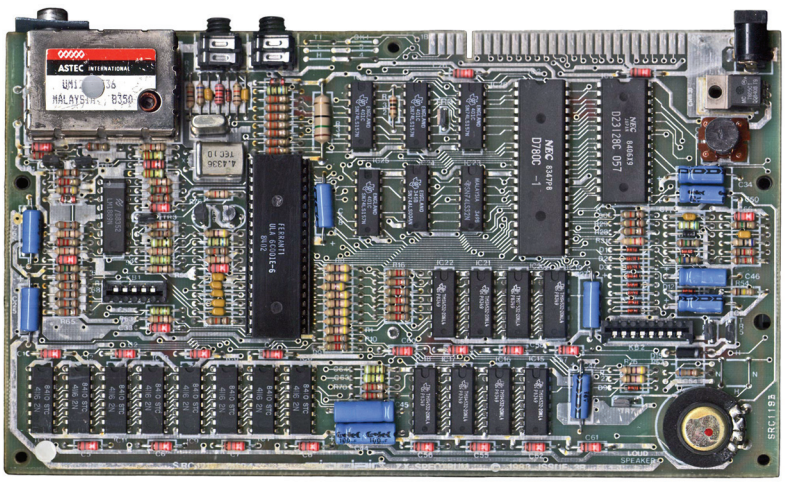




Music Nation

The ZX Spectrum is not renowned for its dulcet tones. Those who did program the original BEEPER chip and the subsequent AY chip in the 128K models, did manage to make the Spectrum sing and some memorable tunes can be attributed to the Sinclair machine.

In the divisive ZX Spectrum versus Commodore 64 playground battles of the Eighties, there was always one trump card that silenced those – albeit temporarily – who championed the Sinclair machine. Even the most resolute Spectrum fan would begrudgingly admit that the C64's Sound Interface Device (or SID for short), with its plethora of features and audio ranges, was vastly superior to the 48K's squeaky beeper, and even the 128K's updated AY chip.



The motherboard of a 48K Spectrum - the speaker can be found on the bottom right.

The original 16 and 48K Spectrums contained an internal speaker with extremely limited capabilities. Able to play only a single note at a time, it was controlled by the BASIC command, BEEP, with the programmer setting parameters for the pitch and duration. Even worse, the processor would be unable to operate any other part until the BASIC BEEPs had finished. Nevertheless, it was all an improvement on the Spectrum's predecessor, the ZX81, which had no sound at all, and canny coders were soon able to find ways around the limitations. This demonstrated succinctly the difference between the Spectrum and Commodore 64. In a similar way to its limited graphical support, the former's weedy audio capabilities forced developers to think outside of the box and find ways of extracting new sounds from the computer's internal speaker. As the years passed and coders unearthed more amazing technical tricks from the Spectrum, so did the musicians, often with the help of bespoke software.

But going back to its original design, why did the Spectrum have such poor

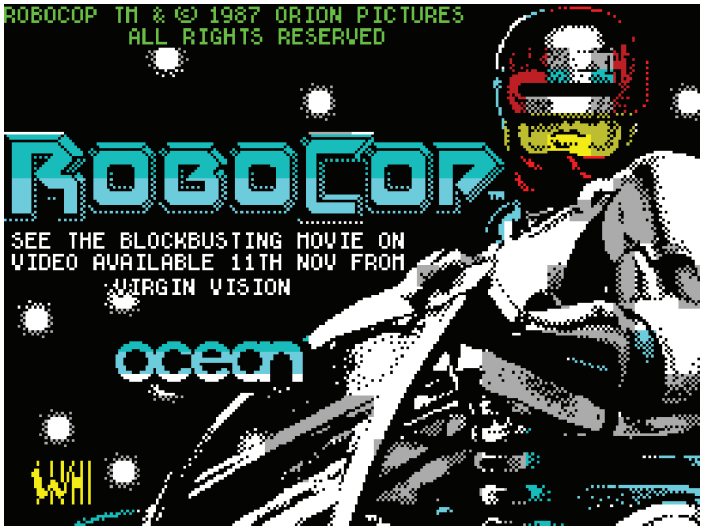
hardware audio capacity compared to many of its peers? Barry Leitch, who created the music for games such as *Gemini Wing*, *Silkworm*, *Xenophobe* and *Night Breed*, tells a popular and most likely accurate reason. "Sinclair made the push to deliver a sub-£100 system," he says. "And if I recall correctly, the AY chips at the time were quite expensive." Rupert Goodwins, who worked on the development of the 128K Spectrum, confirms Barry's thoughts. "The original Spectrum bit-toggled the audio port – and to be honest, you couldn't get much cheaper than that!" Gari Biasillo, a big fan of synthesisers, began creating tunes for Interceptor Micros, based in Aldermaston, Hampshire. His work on the Spectrum included *Joe Blade* and *Target Renegade*, and he touches on a familiar beginning for the Sinclair machine. "As the ZX Spectrum was targeted to the mass consumer market," he recalls, "I don't think the notion of it being used for games was really thought of, and was more of a happy side effect." As games were the only software likely to require complex sound effects and tunes, it's logical that Sinclair would lessen its priority when it came to designing the Spectrum and where to make cost-cutting decisions.

The subsequent success of the ZX Spectrum as a games machine naturally made Sinclair think twice when it came to development of the 128K machine. The AY chip, originally discarded on the grounds of expense, was selected for the upgraded computer. Says Rupert Goodwins, "The AY chip was a good match for the rest of the hardware. It was pretty old by the time we used it but it did its job very well and has useful extra IO thrown in for free. Interfacing it to the Z80 bus was trivial too, and there was quite some desire internally at Sinclair to have some sort of wavetable synthesis at some point, but it wasn't going to be the Spectrum – it just didn't make sense." Another advantage was the industry standard status of the chip. Software writers in theory would be well versed in AY, thus simplifying game porting and reducing valuable development time. "AY was a mass-market chip from Yamaha and was used in many computers," says Gari Biasillo. "Both the AY and SID chips had three channels, but the SID had four waveforms whereas the AY just had square waveforms. Having said that, I loved the sound of square waves, but the AY didn't have the SID's sweet filter."



Joe Blade - the main tune written by Gari Biasillo.

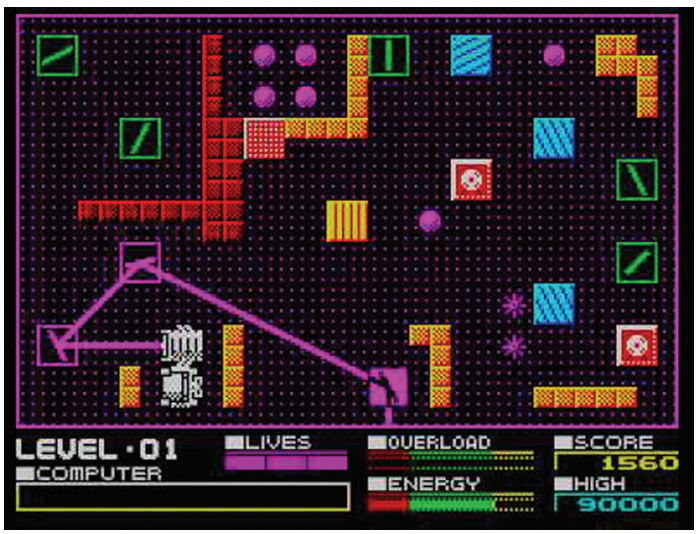
Many look back on the shift to a



The main theme for the 128K version of *Robocop* was composed and written by Jonathan Dunn.

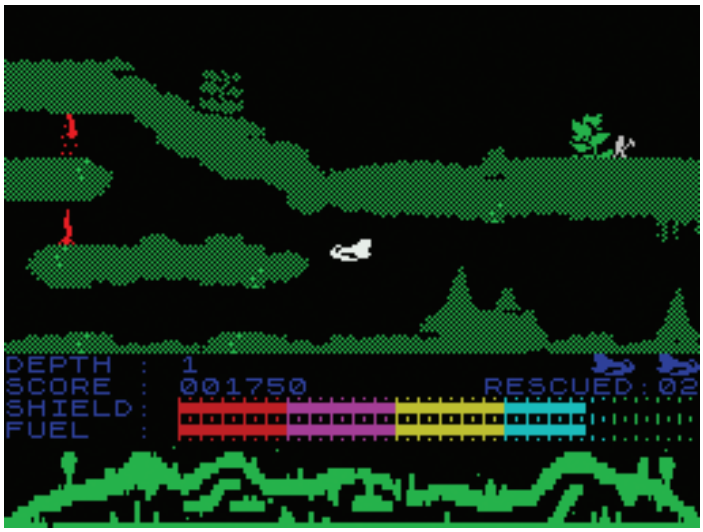
dedicated chip with fondness. Jonathan Dunn, who created the iconic *Robocop* and *Chase HQ* themes recalls, "I actually enjoyed working with the AY chip. In some respects it was much easier to make something sound comparatively good and I think the melodies came through more." Alberto González (also known as Joe McAlby) created several tunes on the Spectrum for developer New Frontier, as well as for AY-bedfellow, the MSX. "I thought the AY chip was great. As a matter of fact you could well combine both the beeper and AY chip to make very cool sounds, a good example being *Chase HQ* by Jonathan Dunn." Dunn himself fondly recalls the work he did on the Ocean game. "It had multiple drum sample channels and AY on top. It was a really interesting sound combination and a great evolution." However, others remain sceptical about the AY chip's level of improvement on the original beeper. "I just don't think it had enough control to create a wide palette of sounds," says Gari Biasillo, "and as such, I always felt limited by its capabilities." Ben Daglish, composer of works such as *Dark Fusion*, *HATE* and *Deflektor*, agrees. "In my humble opinion the AY was a pretty weak chip. It had three voices but no personality." Certainly when it comes to the Commodore 64's SID chip, most agree there is no comparison. Says Alberto Gonzalez, "The SID is a beast of a sound chip with all the waveforms, multi-mode filter and other stuff. It's a proper synthesizer." Nevertheless, the advent of the AY chip freed up vital CPU power enabling games to have proper in-game music on the ZX Spectrum, in addition to meatier sound effects.

Despite the improved capabilities

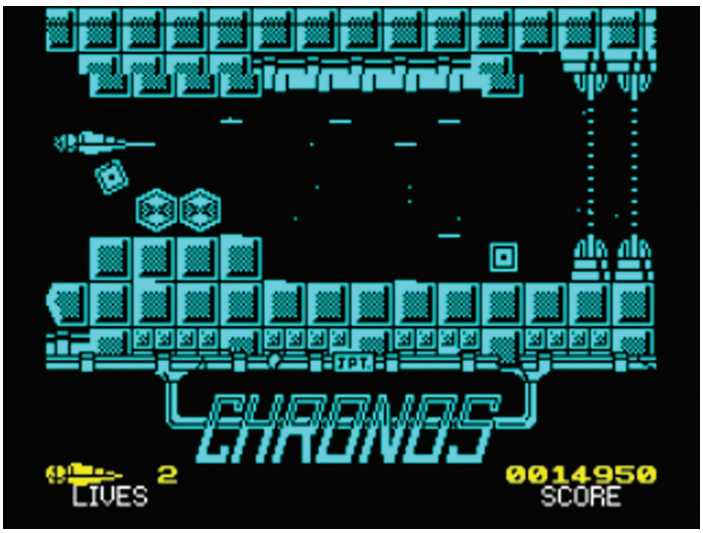


Deflector, main AY theme composed and written by Ben Daglish.

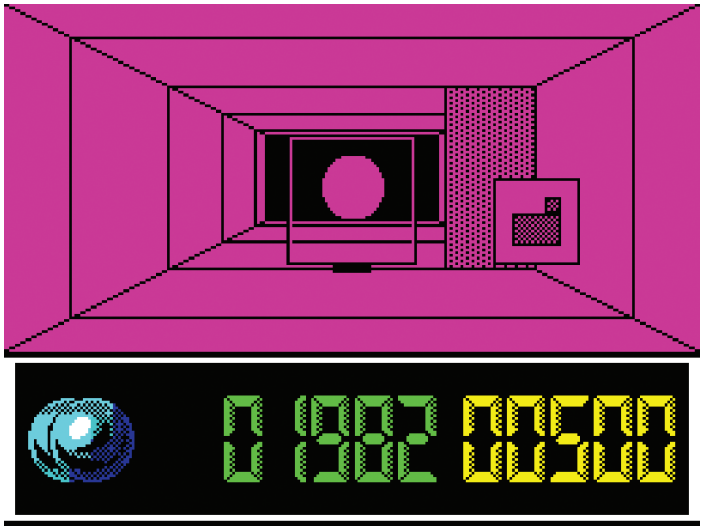
that the AY chip offered, it was with the Spectrum's original on-board beeper that the biggest innovations were achieved. Thanks to the use of bespoke drivers, often written by the musicians themselves, there were some quite amazing tunes generated by this supposedly weak sound device. And none were better than the incredible work from Tim Follin. "Around the time I got a Spectrum, my brother Mike was working at a local company programming games," recalls Tim, "and he asked me if I could write a tune for one of his games." The game was *Subterranean Stryker* and it would contain Tim Follin's first music for a commercial title. "For Mike's next game, *Vectron*, it was probably the first time I'd actually thought about a tune musically rather than just technically, as I'd figured out how to create three channels of sound playing at the same time." Tim would soon be creating amazing guitar-riff effect sounds for games such as *Agent X* and *Chronos*, a result of a happy accident. "The sound output of the Spectrum was basically composed of square waves which happens to be what a distorted guitar sounds like – a distorted guitar sound is basically a clipped waveform." Using an assembly compiler to create his music, Tim would type in the numbers manually to represent pitch and duration. "However, with my multi-channel programs, the higher the pitch, the more processor time it took," he says, "So effectively the pitch became lower. And I had to manually change the pitch by ear the whole time to keep it sounding in tune!" This process of trial and error proved very successful, and this achievement with the original Spectrum beeper led Tim to be a little deflated



Subterranean Stryker - Tim Follin's first musical ZX Spectrum contribution.



Chronos - Five channel simulated tunes on the humble Spectrum's beeper by Tim Follin.



Light Corridor, main AY theme composed and written by Alberto González.

by its descendant. "I think the AY chip obviously sounded much cleaner than my multi-channel attempts, but it was actually just three channels of square waves. You had to create music that played to its strengths."

When it comes to the recognition of their peers, Tim Follin stands tall with Rob Hubbard. Says Ben Daglish, "I've always said Rob Hubbard was the master, although I think the innovations on the Spectrum came from the programmers rather than the musicians." Jonathan Dunn cites his main influences as Hubbard and Martin Galway, calling the former's catchy tune to Spellbound one he 'still whistles from time to time today', while Tim Follin himself recalls hearing 'real' music coming from a computer thanks to the erstwhile Mr. Hubbard. Tim himself has plenty of fans, including Barry Leitch. "From what I've heard on YouTube, I'm just blown away by what people managed to squeeze out of [the Spectrum beeper]," he says. "Hearing what Tim did in *Vectron* in 1985 was just stunning." Gari Biasillo agrees. "Tim was a master at coaxing sounds out of the Spectrum and his tunes were musical to my ear, rather than the rhythmic music that proliferated in that era. His title music for *Agent X* and *Chronos* was great – they had a grittiness that the AY just couldn't manage."

A quick search on the aforementioned YouTube reveals the popularity of the original Spectrum beeper today – as well as AY chip tunes. "I think it may be down to authenticity," muses Ben Daglish. "It may be raw, it may be beepy, but it's the real deal!" Alberto González adds, "There's undeniably a nostalgic factor in it for many people. But I also think it's because of its simplicity and uniqueness. Past compositions had to rely on catchy melodies and clever tricks to make the music interesting so there's a great amount of good music in the old 8-bit games."

For some it was a calling, for others just a job. But all the musicians in this article have created amazing and memorable tunes for the ZX Spectrum and should be rightly celebrated for their contributions to our entertainment. "Over the years I've been amazed to hear all the great feedback from people who remember the work I did," concludes Jonathan Dunn.

"I feel really honoured to be remembered for something that, at the time, was great fun to do. It wasn't really a job!"


Pull-Out Supplement
Robin Candy's
PLAYING TIPS
SPEC
SPECIA
SPECIAL
SPECIAL
SPECIAL TAPE OFFER INSIDE

SOME CLONES



Didaktik Gama ‘87



Russian Clones





Didaktik M



Byte

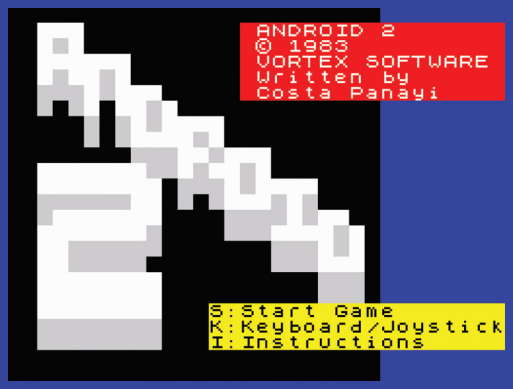


Orel BK-08



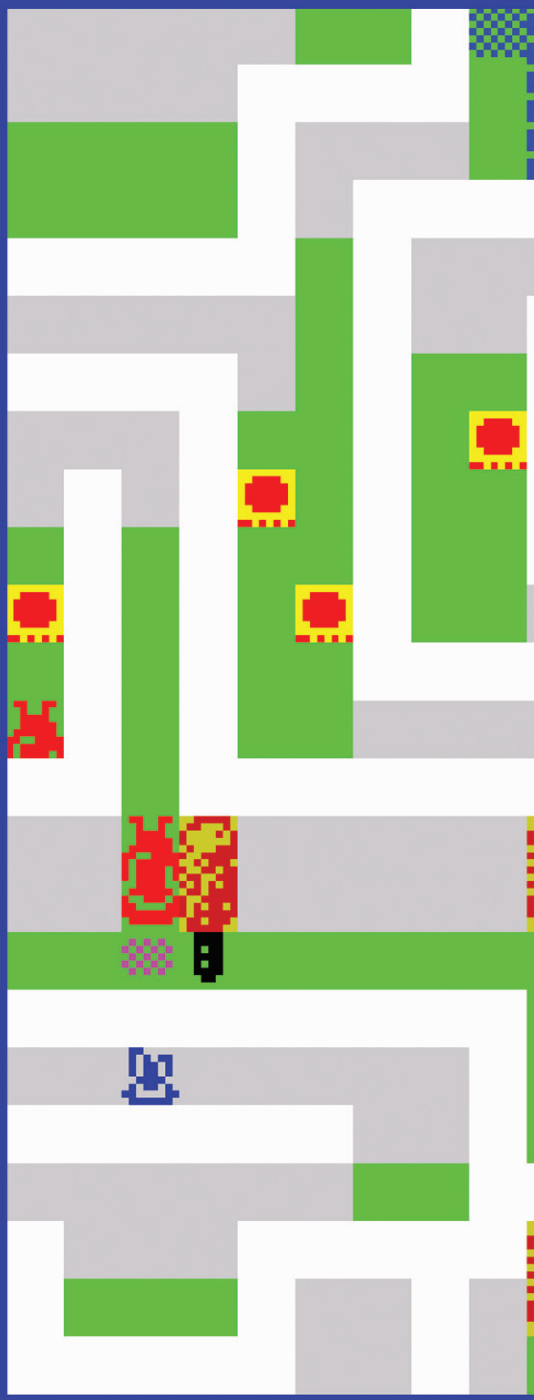
The cover of Issue 21 of Crash magazine by Oliver Frey.

THE GAMES



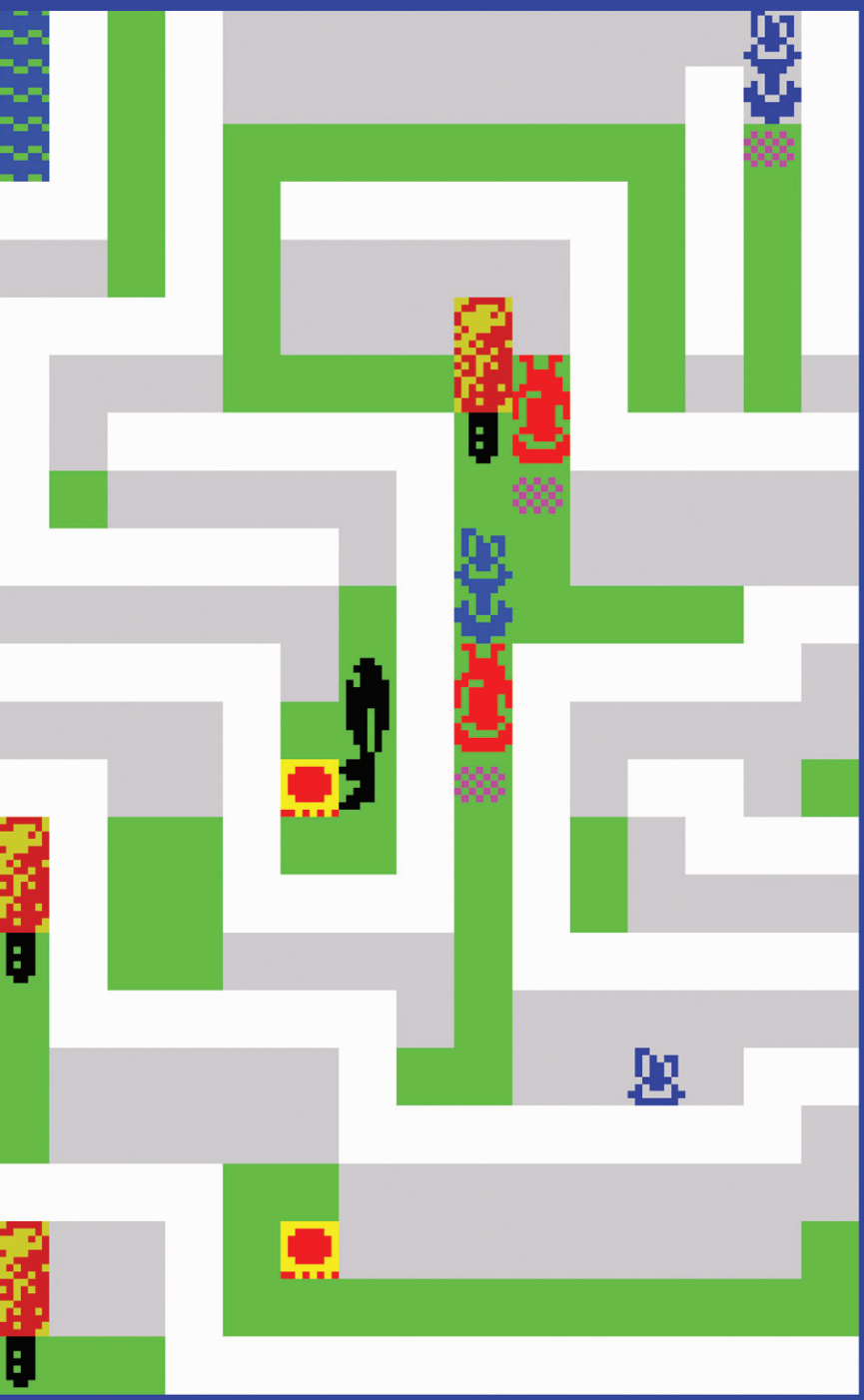
Name	:	Android 2
Year	:	1983
Publisher	:	Vortex Software
Author	:	Costa Panayi



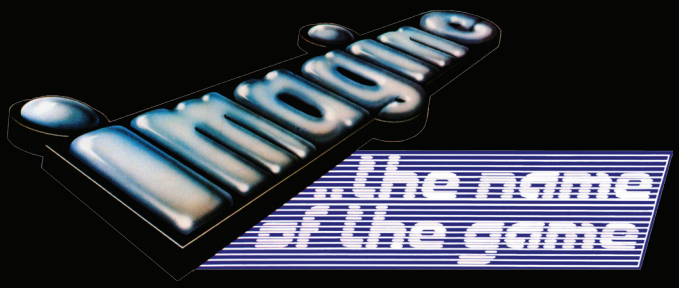




A sequel is never normally as good as the original, where the author/film company or whoever is attempting to cash in on the success of a new idea and hoping to turn it into a franchise. On occasion, the flaws that spoilt the 'Marmite' original catapult the sequel to a new level. *Android 2* is such a commodity - a game that improves on its older brethren in leaps and bounds. For the time, the graphics of *Android 2* were claimed to be best of breed with a colourful encompassing maze to be explored, depicted in solid 3D - this was the game to load to show off your Spectrum's capabilities to your mates back in 1983. The object of the game simply to find and destroy five cuddly Millitoids hidden away in three different zones, by shooting them in the head three times. Of course there are obstacles in your way adding a little challenge to the mission in hand including land mines, Hoverdroids and Bouncers which are indestructible but very predictable. Costa Panayi comes up trumps again at the helm of Vortex Software.

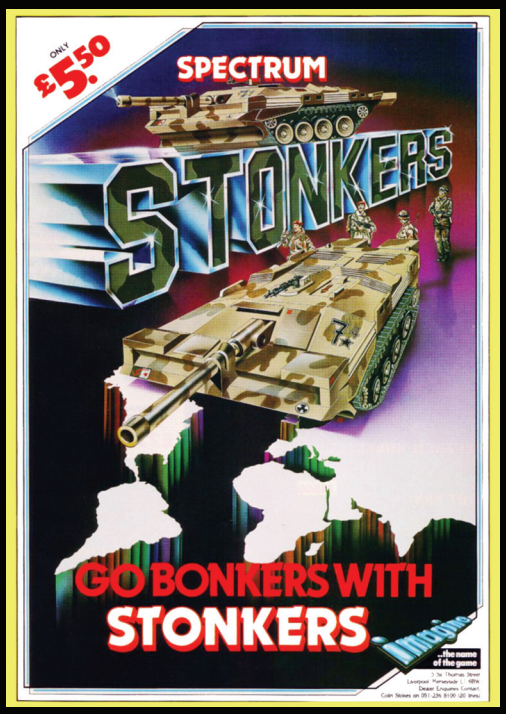








Name	:	Stonkers
Year	:	1983
Publisher	:	Imagine Software
Author	:	John Gibson, Paul Lindale







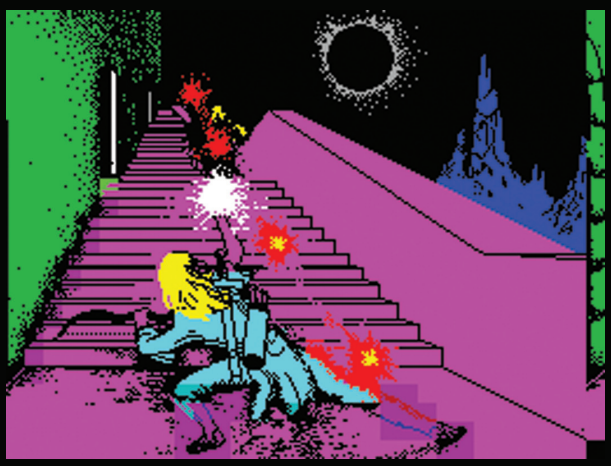
Mr Gibson would go on to have a considerable career in videogames, but it is with a triumvirate of titles for Liverpool's Imagine Software where he began. First came *Molar Maul* and *Zzoom* before he answered the calls from Imagine's management for a fast-paced strategy title with *Stonkers*. *Stonkers* is famous for two reasons. Firstly, it's an early example of the real time strategy genre that would become exceptionally popular over ten years later with the *Command & Conquer* series; and secondly, it has gone down in internet folklore as a sarcastic joke answer to whenever anyone asks about recalling a game from their childhood. And in fact the game itself is pretty nifty. Controlling one of two armies in an unnamed war, your objective is to eliminate the enemy units and base while keeping your own army well-supplied and active. Controlling the various units is relatively easy and for a strategy game *Stonkers* does not require the hours of concentration that many of its slower-paced peers demanded. Despite it having become the butt of that internet joke over the years, it's a playable and addictive game, especially when played against a fellow human.

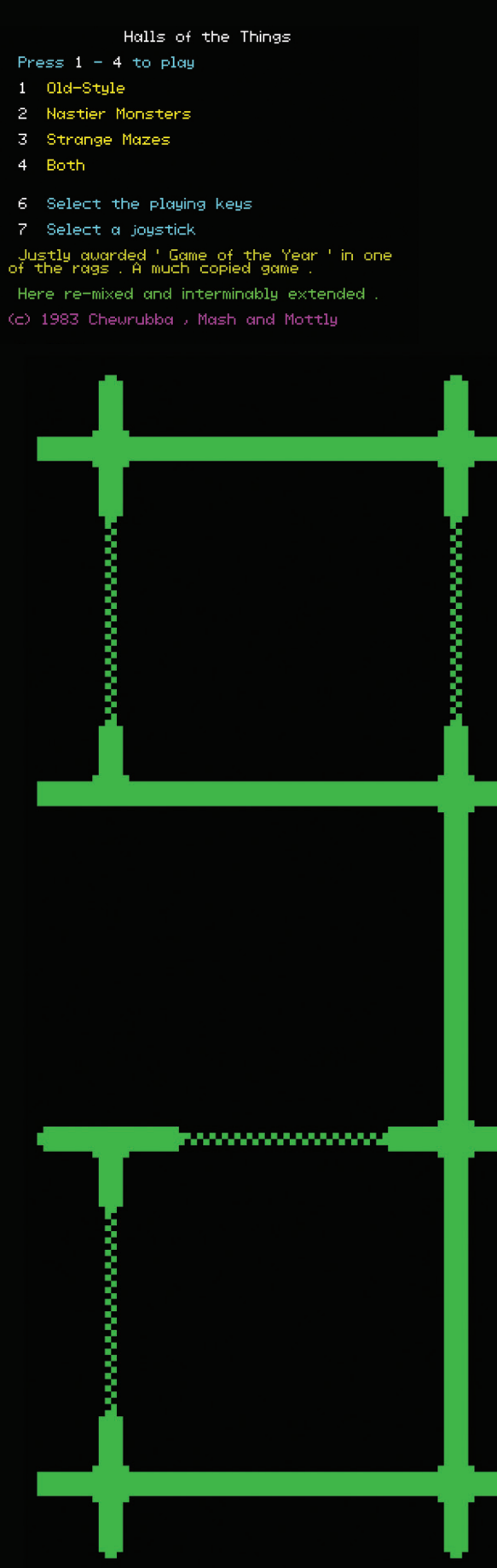


Crystal

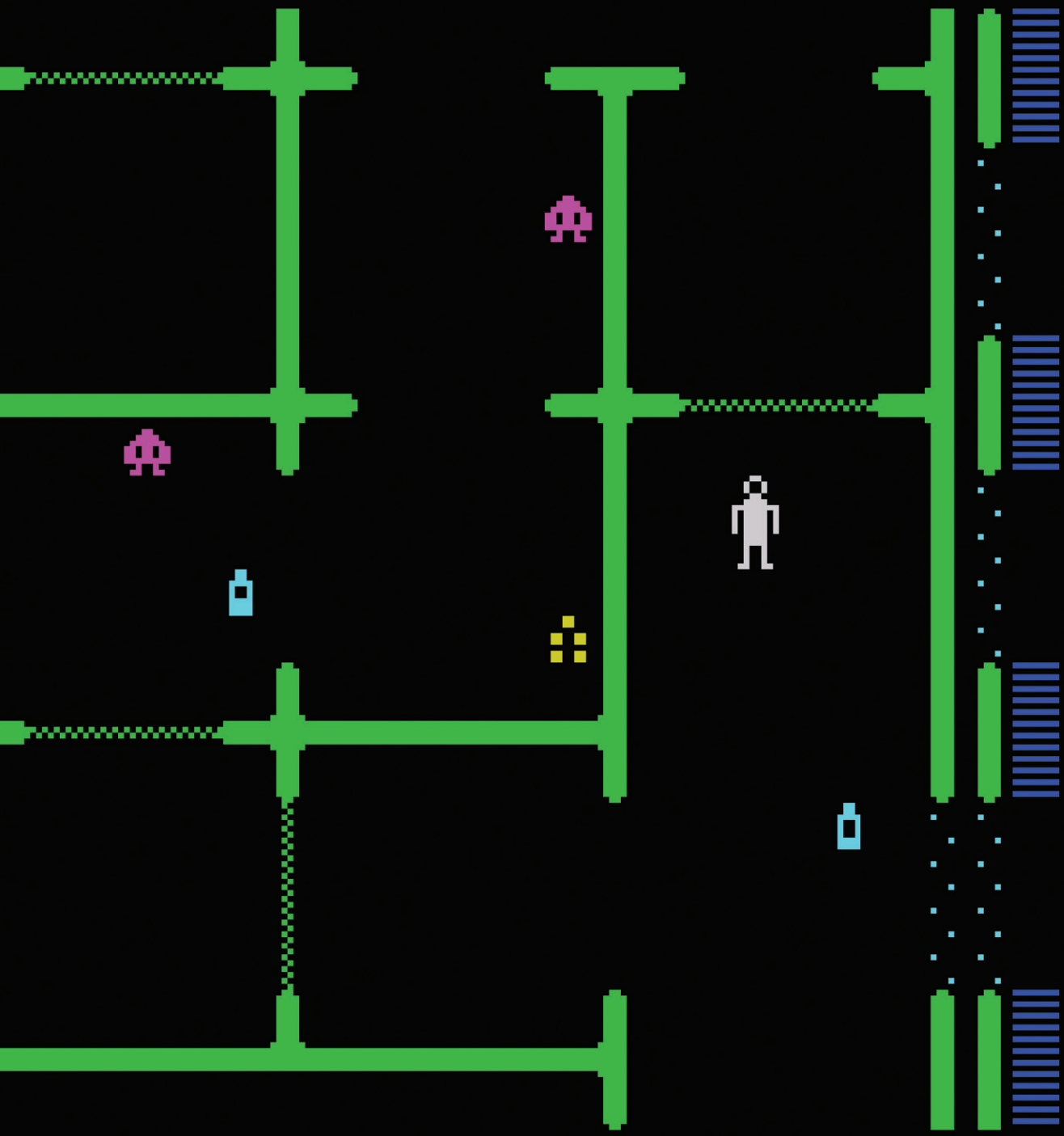
Name	:	Halls of Things
Year	:	1983
Publisher	:	Crystal Computing
Author	:	Neil Mottershead, Simon Brattel, Martin S. Horsley







Halls of the Things is the creation of Simon Brattel, Martin Horsley and Neil Mottershead, three university students from Manchester. Disappointed with what they perceived to be inferior types of games, the three brainstormed ideas which resulted in what, in 1983, was a highly innovative game for several reasons. Firstly, a huge map that could be explored freely, a real bonus in an era where many games were still single-screen. Secondly, enemies exist off-screen and wander around regardless of the player; and thirdly, the enemies have the same weapons as the player, increasing the challenge further. Both a technical achievement and a pretty decent game, the player has no mission other than to escape the dungeon while collecting treasure and avoiding/eliminating the titular 'Tings'. *Halls Of The Things* was an outstanding success for Crystal and their biggest hit by some distance. The team would go on to help form Design Design and create brilliant shooters such as *Dark Star* and *Forbidden Planet*.



QUICKSILVA



Name : Bugaboo the Flea
Year : 1983
Publisher : Quicksilva Ltd
Author : Paco Suarez Garcia,
Paco Portalo Calero

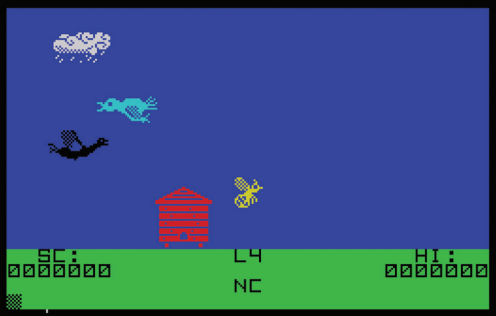




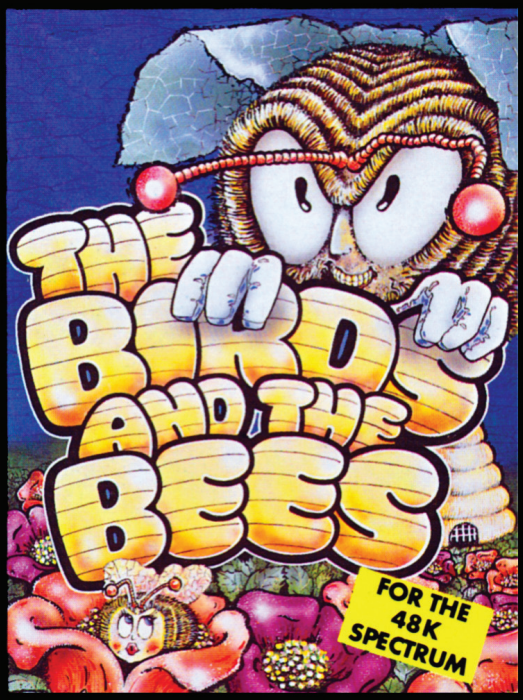


Written by Spanish developer Indescomp, (AKA Paco and Paco!) the objective in *Bugaboo* is straightforward: guide the small insect from the bottom of the cavern it has found itself trapped in, to the top, and freedom. While this may sound easy, the authors have utilised an odd control scheme that makes sure *Bugaboo's* escape is anything but. The game uses just two keys – jump left and jump right, with the length of time depressed reflecting how far the flea jumps. The only enemy is a pesky yellow dragon which appears after a certain amount of time, while awkwardly-placed crags can impede Bugaboo's progress and send him hurtling back down the depths of the cavern. *Bugaboo* is an unusual game with colourful graphics and an original style of gameplay. Alas, it could also be a frustrating experience due to its high difficulty level and harsh method of punishing the player the more they failed (the dragon appears quicker each subsequent attempt). It is also one of the first British-published games developed in Spain.





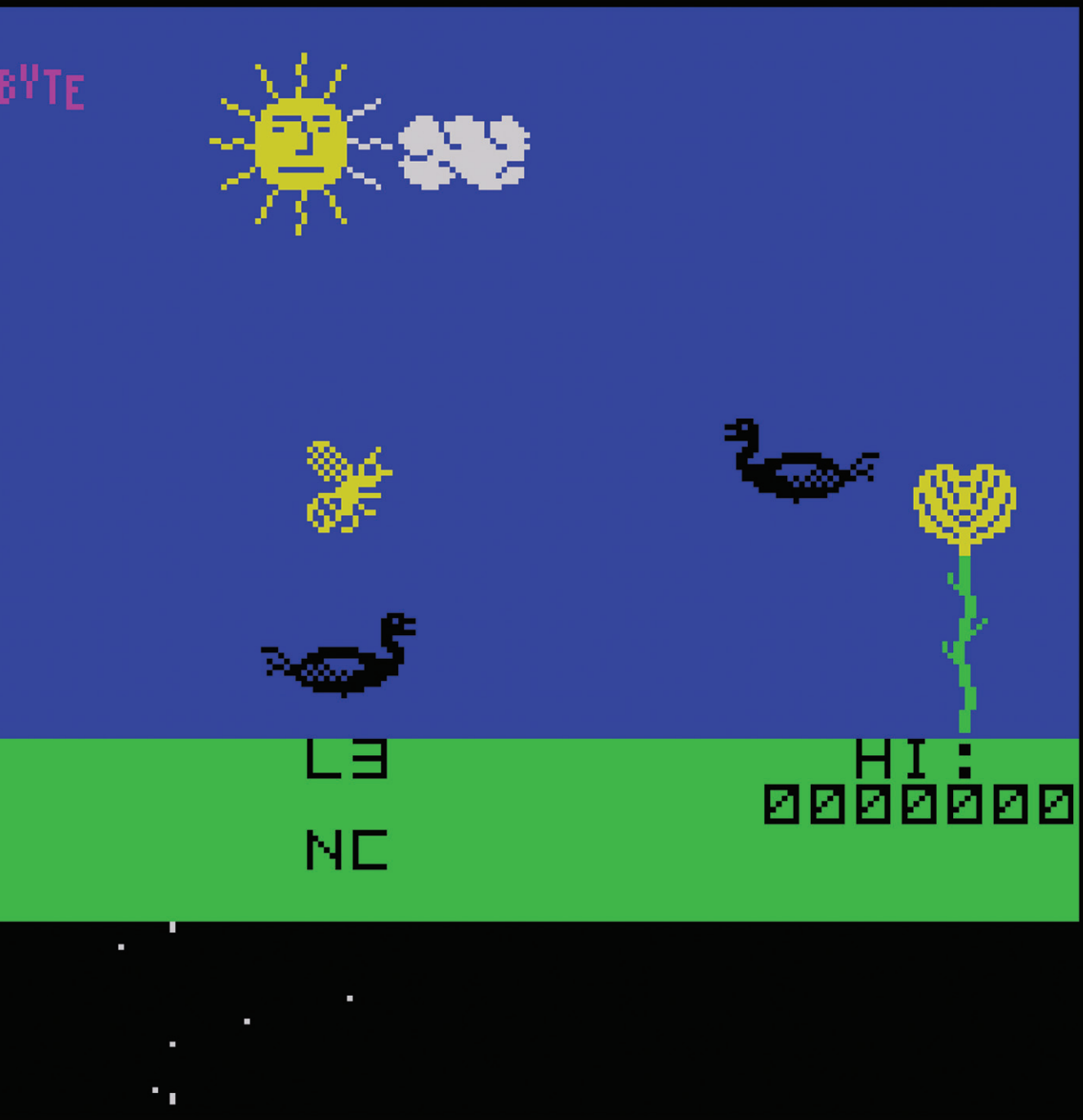
Name	:	The Birds and the Bees
Year	:	1983
Publisher	:	Bug-Byte Software
Author	:	Adrian Sherwin

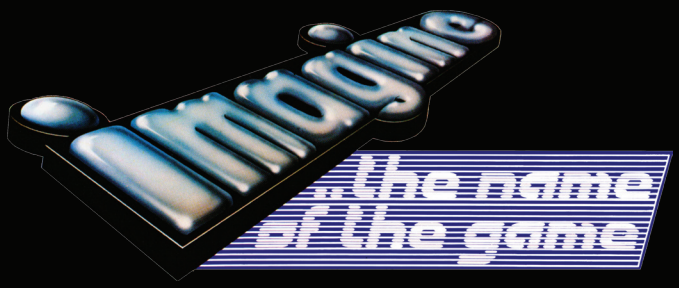






The Birds And The Bees stars the alliteration-tastic Boris Bee from Birkenhead, and follows his escapades in locating and securing nectar from a nearby field. Alas, this task is far from simple; vicious plants and fellow insects (centipedes, wasps) threaten poor Boris, in addition to the feathered enemies of the game's title. Collect a certain amount of nectar and it's back to Boris' hive, although beware: the more of the sweet stuff he carries, the slower Boris flies, and eventually a hungry bear appears and threatens his home. *The Birds And The Bees* is an early Spectrum game from Liverpool software house Bug-Byte, and drew attention thanks to Matthew *Manic Miner* Smith providing its colourful graphics. Perhaps due to this, the game was a touch overrated at the time, as it certainly lacks playability thanks to the initial difficulty in controlling the game's main character. Persevere, however, and there's a decent game here, a pleasant rendition of Flight Of The Bumble Bee and a neat Defender-esque gameplay style.



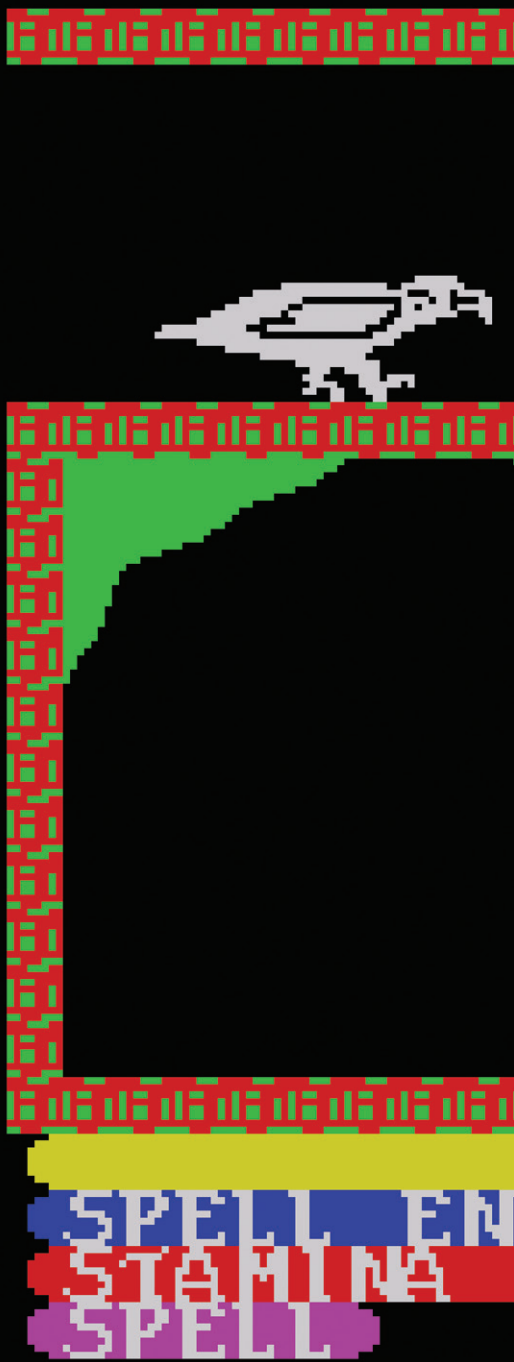




Name	:	Alchemist
Year	:	1983
Publisher	:	Imagine Software
Author	:	Ian Weatherburn, Paul Lindale





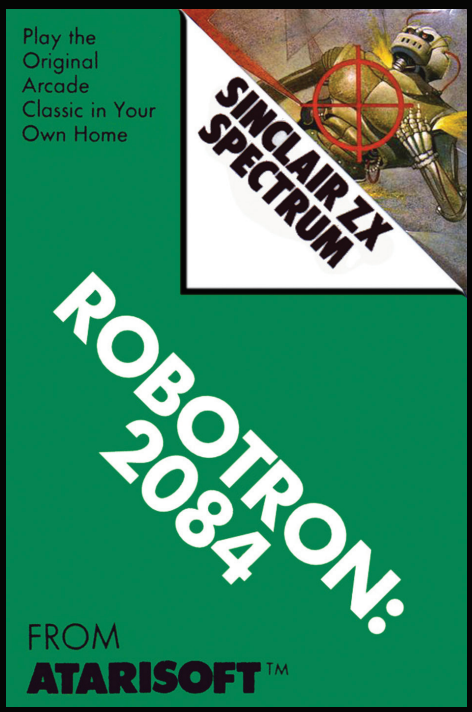


Before its spectacular implosion in 1984, Liverpool's Imagine Software had carved a decent reputation thanks to its glossy and novel approach to games production. Its early success wouldn't have been possible, however, without some decent games, one of which was *Alchemist*. Playing the eponymous wizard, the player has to negotiate several screens of hazards in order to defeat an evil warlock. To do this, you need to discover and piece together the four parts of a magic scroll that will create the ominous-sounding 'Spell of Destruction'. Some screens can only be traversed by transforming into a golden eagle but this saps your valuable spell energy; careful use of spells and this transformation is needed to succeed. *Alchemist* may not look like much by today's standards but back in 1983 it was a notable level above its peers in terms of gameplay and graphics. Written by the sadly-departed Ian Weatherburn, early copies came on a very fetching gold cassette and box.



ATARISOFT™

Name	:	Robotron: 2084
Year	:	19XX
Publisher	:	Atarisoft
Author	:	Paul Holmes

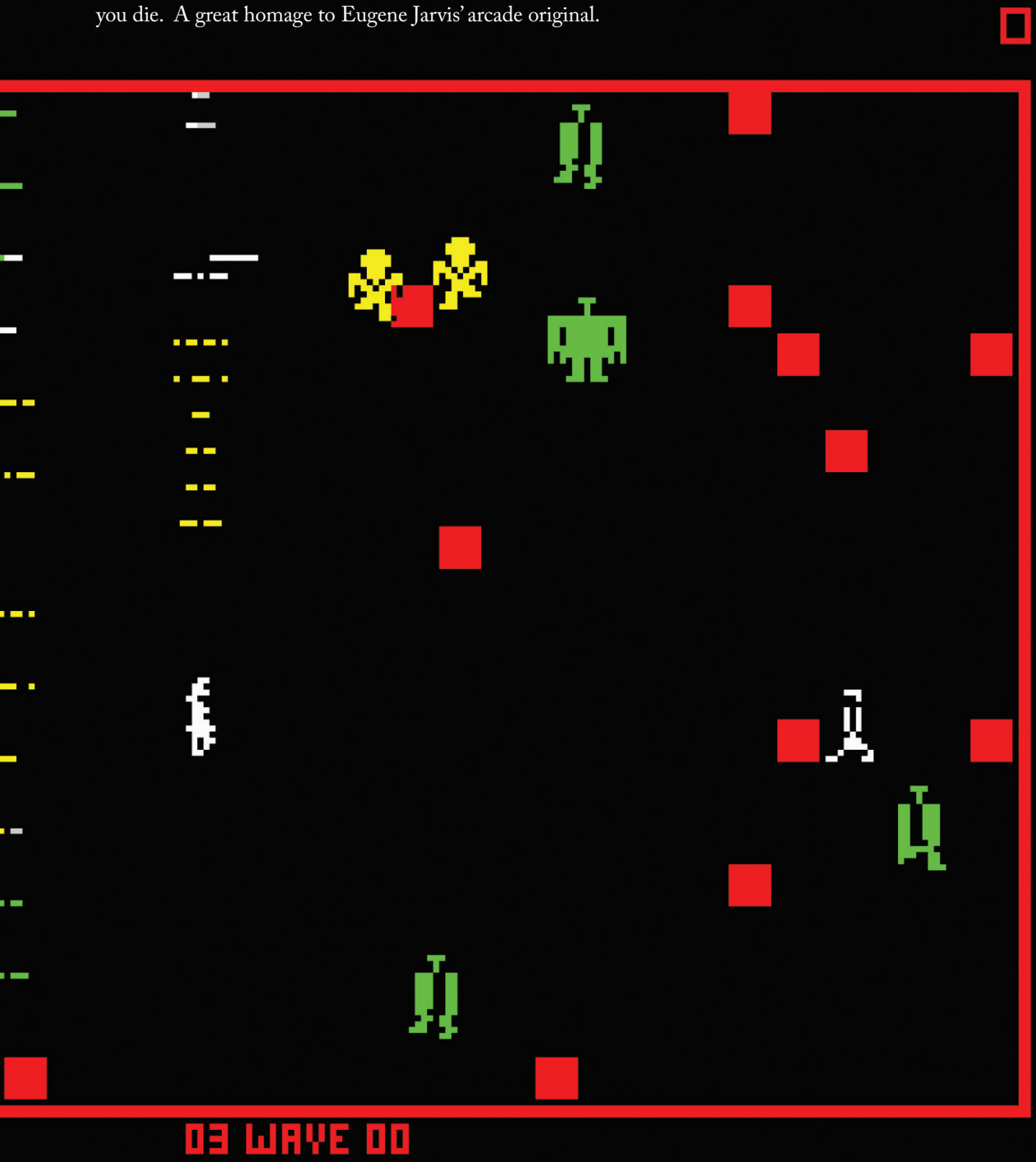




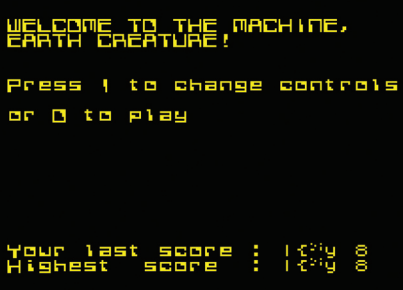




The inclusion of *Robotron* in this publication is a special case - the game was developed on the ZX Spectrum but was never actually released for whatever reason back in the day by Atarisoft. The game was even reviewed in the October 1984 issue of 'Personal Computer Games'. Based on the frantic dual joystick monster hit in the arcades, this version plays brilliantly considering the processing power available to push the amount of sprite action across the screen. And boy does it get frantic quickly. At the start of each level your little man appears in the centre of the screen and within seconds deadly Robotrons home in on you - destroy or be destroyed is the aim of the game as you move around the screen shooting anything and everything that gets a little too close. Clear the screen and it's onto the next level with vastly more Robotrons filling the screen. Later on you will meet giant Hulks, Enforcers, Tanks and Brains - best not to ask what these do or your brain may melt. The game is relentless - blink and you die. A great homage to Eugene Jarvis' arcade original.



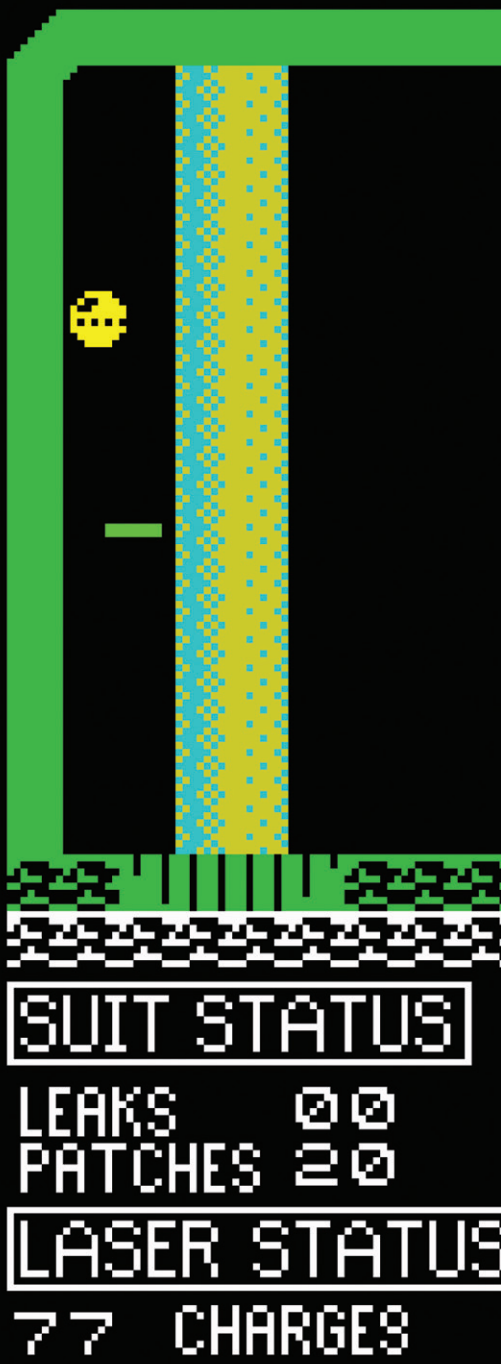




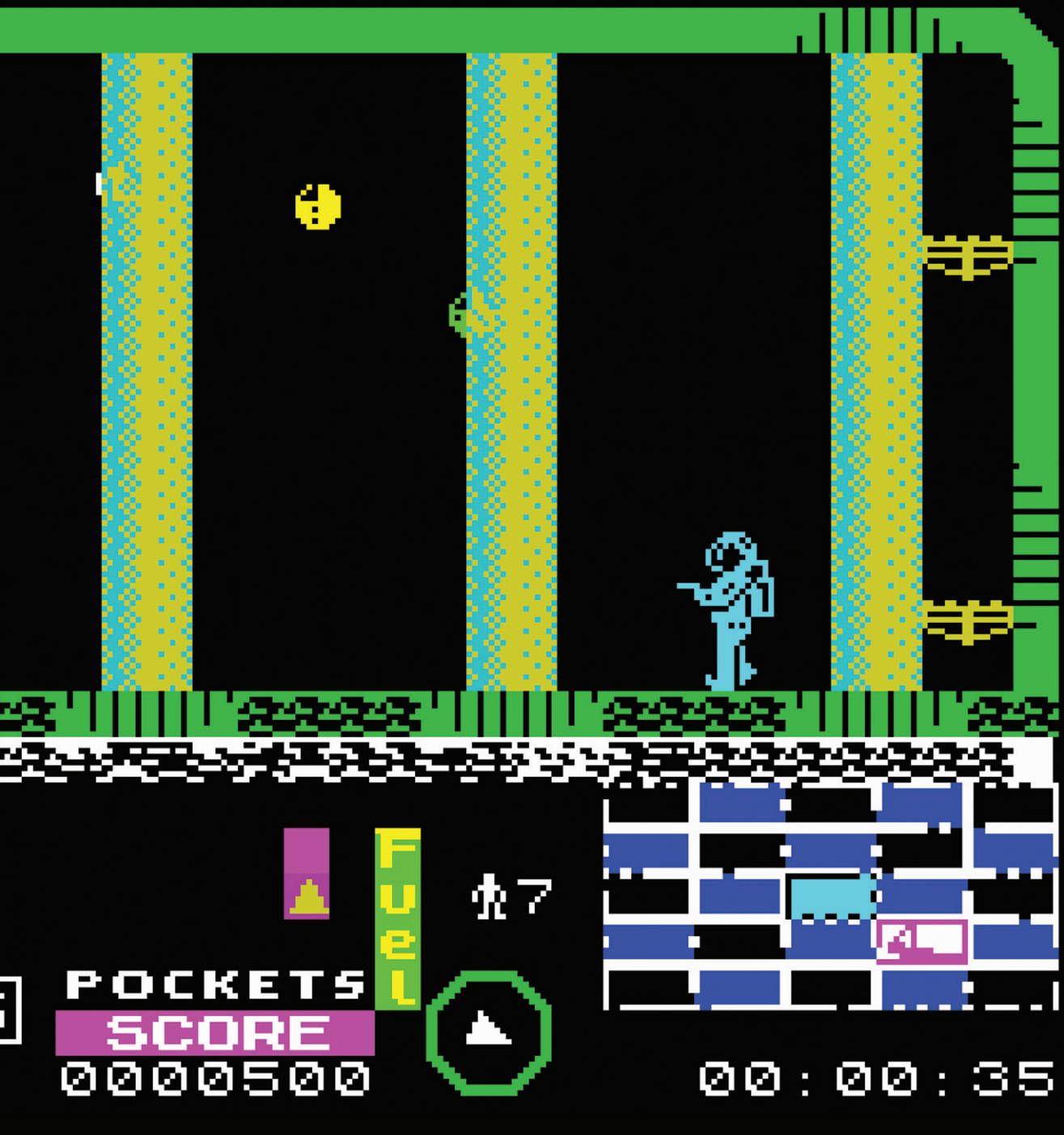
Name	:	Strangeloop
Year	:	1984
Publisher	:	Virgin Games
Author	:	Charles Goodwin







Arcade style gaming on an industrial scale with 240 screens set in an abandoned space factory taken over by evil robots. Robots that have made it their purpose to destroy Earth (as they often seem to do). With a setting like that you will be glad they fitted your spacesuit with a laser and left the odd jet bike to help you on your way. Whilst these help somewhat, you will still need to collect various items, solve puzzles, find fuel and charge packs (for your laser) to realise your ultimate goal; getting into the control room. But there is just one more problem. You see, with this being a factory and all, there is 'stuff' floating around which if not avoided will puncture your space suit. When this happens the ever-decreasing oxygen meter will speed up, making it imperative you find yourself a patch to fix that pesky leak. Plenty of humour, action, screen variation and puzzles galore make this one to keep coming back to. Lucky they included a save feature then isn't it?

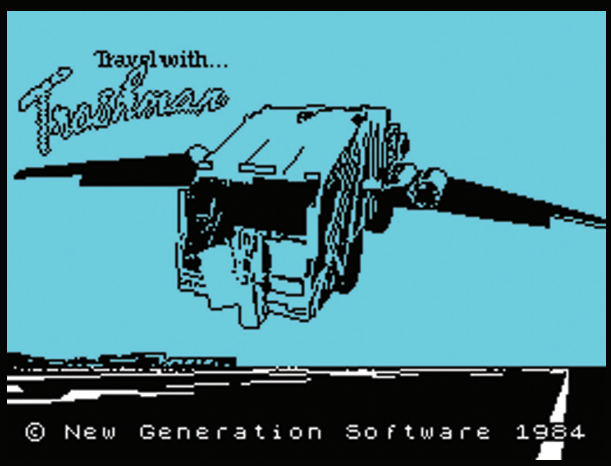


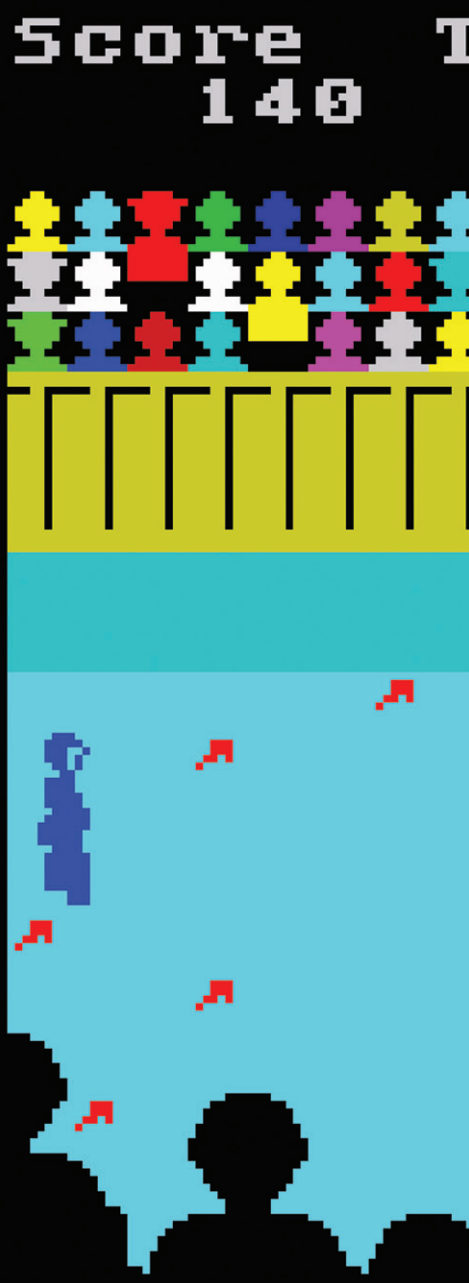
New Generation Software



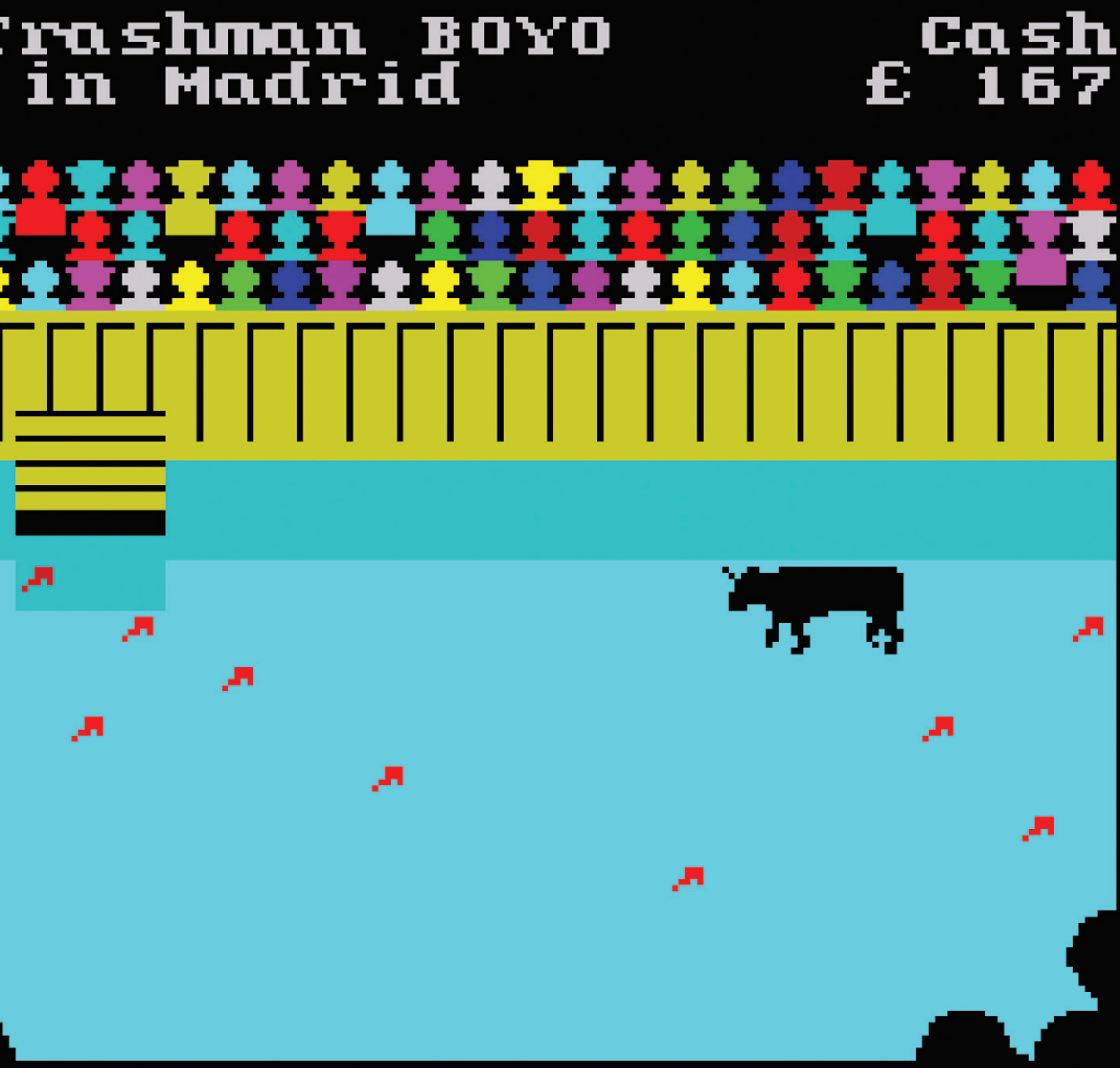
Name	:	Travel With Trashman
Year	:	1984
Publisher	:	New Generation Software
Author	:	Malcolm E. Evans



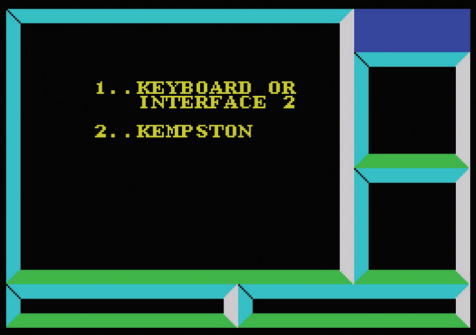




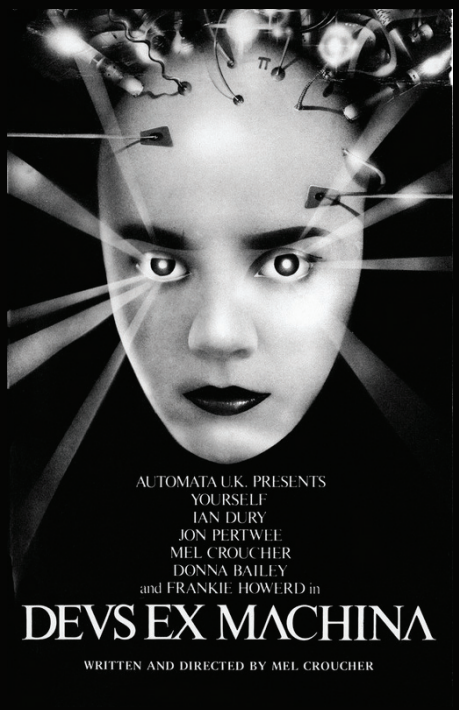
Malcolm Evans wasn't a fan of sequels, and this follow-up to New Generation's biggest hit was not initially part of his schedule. However, when development of another game overran and the cashflow of the software house stagnated, he was pressed by his twin brother, Rod, to create *Travel With Trashman*. Despite the time pressure, the veteran coder started from scratch, creating an entirely different style of game to *Trashman* while retaining its rubbish-collecting theme. As the title suggests, Trashman must now explore the world, visiting famous cities and ridding them of their litter. A bullring in Spain, French pavement café and a German beer festival are some of the stereotypical locations he must clean in order to earn enough cash to jet off to the next destination. Various characters suited to each scenario must be avoided lest Trashman lose all his money and become stranded, thus ending the game. While graphically not the finest game, *Travel With Trashman* remains an original attempt at broadening the rubbish-collecting theme, and one that saved New Generation's bacon, albeit for only a short time.



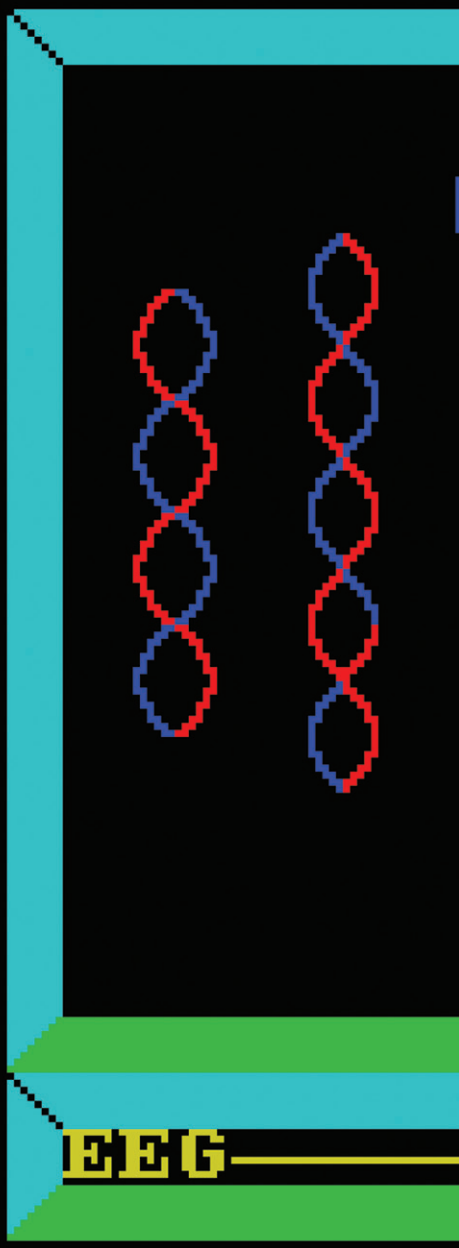
AUTOMATA



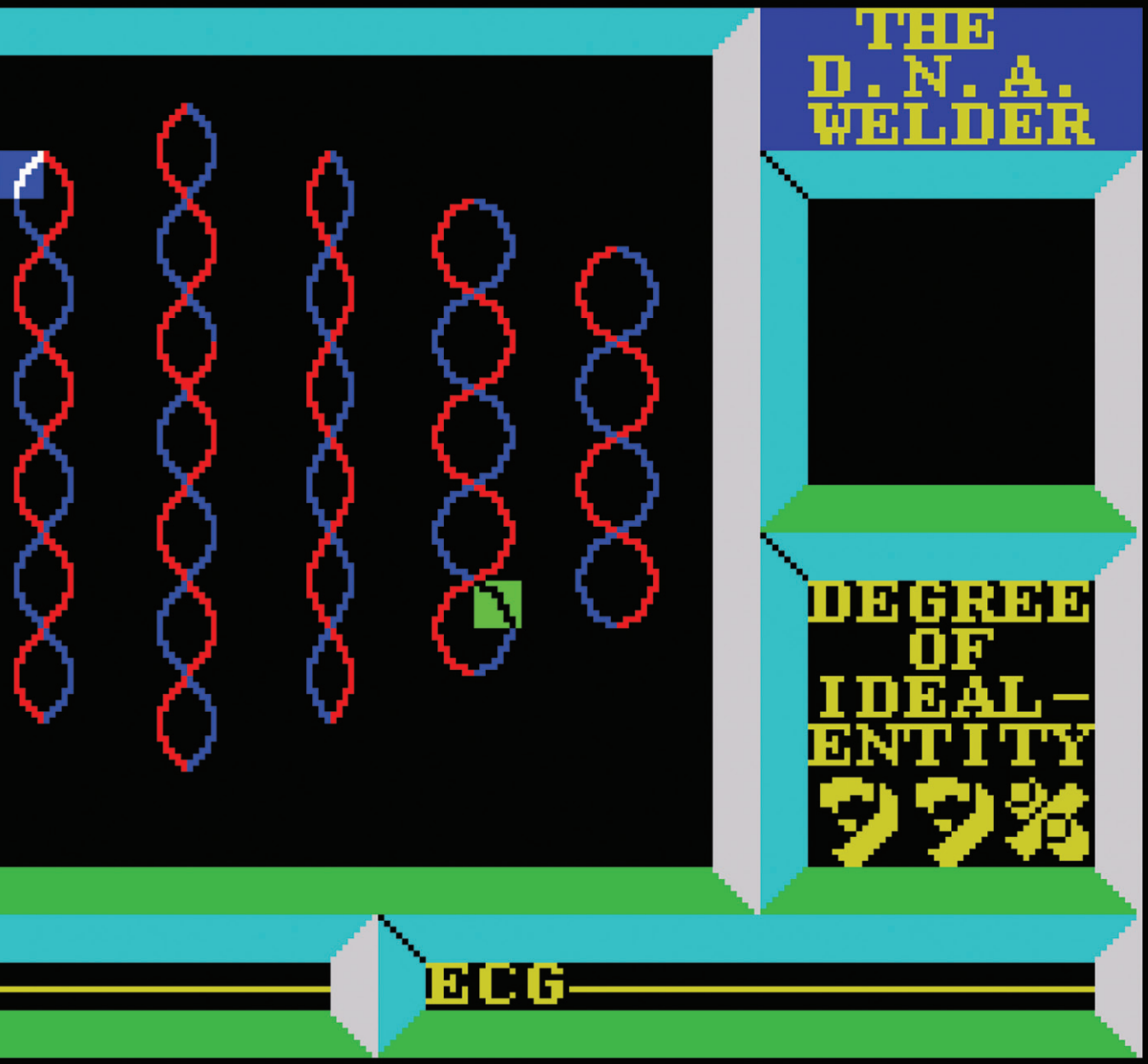
Name : Deus Ex Machina
Year : 1984
Publisher : Automata
Author : Mel Croucher, Andrew Stagg







Deus Ex Machina was planned by designer Mel Croucher to be a new experience in gaming. A combination of visual, sonic stimuli and high concept, it was going to be the game that changed the whole perception of videogames as an interactive medium. Instead it alienated its creator from the industry and was partly responsible for bringing down the company he had created several years earlier. Retreating from the grind of software production in 1984, Croucher was inspired by a eulogy he had delivered at a funeral to create a game based around the seven ages of man. Part interactive movie, part game and part visual story, the breadth of ambition was admirable in a time of countless arcade and platform clones. Unfortunately *Deus Ex Machina's* high production costs (it featured many guest star voices including Jon Pertwee and Ian Dury) meant Automata was keen to recoup as much cost as quickly as possible. The game's subsequent high price tag ensured it became a premium product and as such, a prime target for professional pirates everywhere. Despite an incredibly positive reception in the press, distributors didn't quite know how to market the game, and combined with the high piracy ratio, destined *Deus Ex Machina* to become an interesting failure rather than the genre-smashing iconoclast as intended.





Name	:	Kokotoni Wilf
Year	:	1984
Publisher	:	Elite Systems Ltd
Author	:	Andy Williams, Neil A. Bate, Stephen Lockley, Rory C. Green







2D flip screen games were a proven and winning format on the Spectrum with Miner Willy and Monty Mole probably being the most well known and loved characters. Elite Systems attempt at hitting those highs involved a magicians' winged apprentice, *Kokotoni Wilf*. Travelling through six time zones to search for fragments of the magicians' amulet would have been a challenge for most, unless you had been given a pair of wings by the very same magician. Collecting all the pieces of the amulet in each time zone reveals one final flashing piece that when retrieved takes Wilf on to the next zone. As a final push to boost sales, Elite launched the game with a competition, the first 100 people who sent in the game completion message won a copy of their next game. A dated looking platform game compared to many others of the time, *Kokotoni Wilf* proves that playability can win the day over visual content and is still a title that many a Spectrum fan remembers fondly.



ACTIVISION
HOME COMPUTER SOFTWARE

Press corresponding Number
on Keyboard:

1. KEYBOARD CONTROLS
2. SINCLAIR INTERFACE
3. KEMPSTON INTERFACE
4. CURSOR INTERFACE

Name : H.E.R.O
Year : 1984
Publisher : Activision
Author : David Aubrey-Jones



ACTIVISION®

H.E.R.O.™



COPYRIGHT: ACTIVISION 1984

DESIGNED BY /PAR
JOHN VAN RYZIN
ADAPTED BY / PAR
SOFTWARE CONVERSIONS LTD

POWE

LEVE

H.E.R.O or *Helicopter Emergency Rescue Operation*, to give it its full moniker, was originally released on the Atari 2600 to great acclaim and features the unusually named protagonist Roderick Hero (R. Hero - get it?). The main aim of the game is to enter a mine complex and rescue as many poor stranded miners as you can before you succumb to the many hazards that await. Helping you in this task are your mini helicopter backpack and your head mounted laser, which is handy for both blasting through walls and also clearing the mines of the things that want you dead. Adding to your woes is the volcanic activity that has released lava into the shafts, making the walls red hot and deadly in the process. You do however have six sticks of dynamite, that can blast through walls without draining your laser power, which is in short supply. The mines are large and complex and the gameplay never tedious, but unusually for a 2600 to Spectrum port, this game looks less detailed and colourful than its predecessor despite the Spectrum's obvious resolution advantage. It does however remain a great game to play.



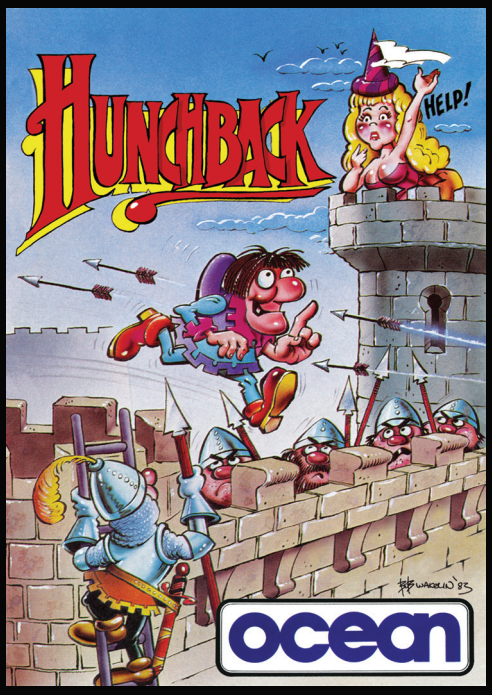




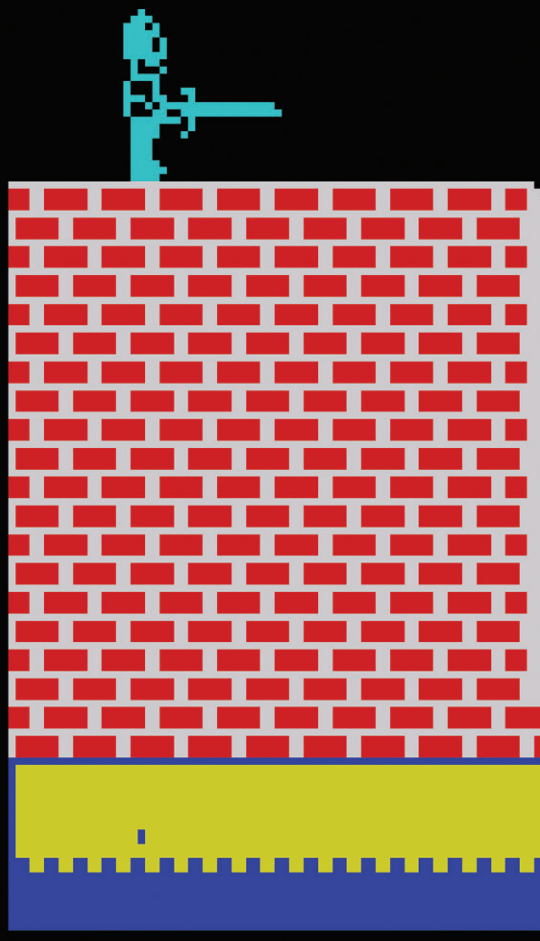
PRESENTS
HUNCHBACK

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2. KEMPSTON INTERFACE
3. PROTEK INTERFACE
4. SINCLAIR INTERFACE 2
5. DEMO

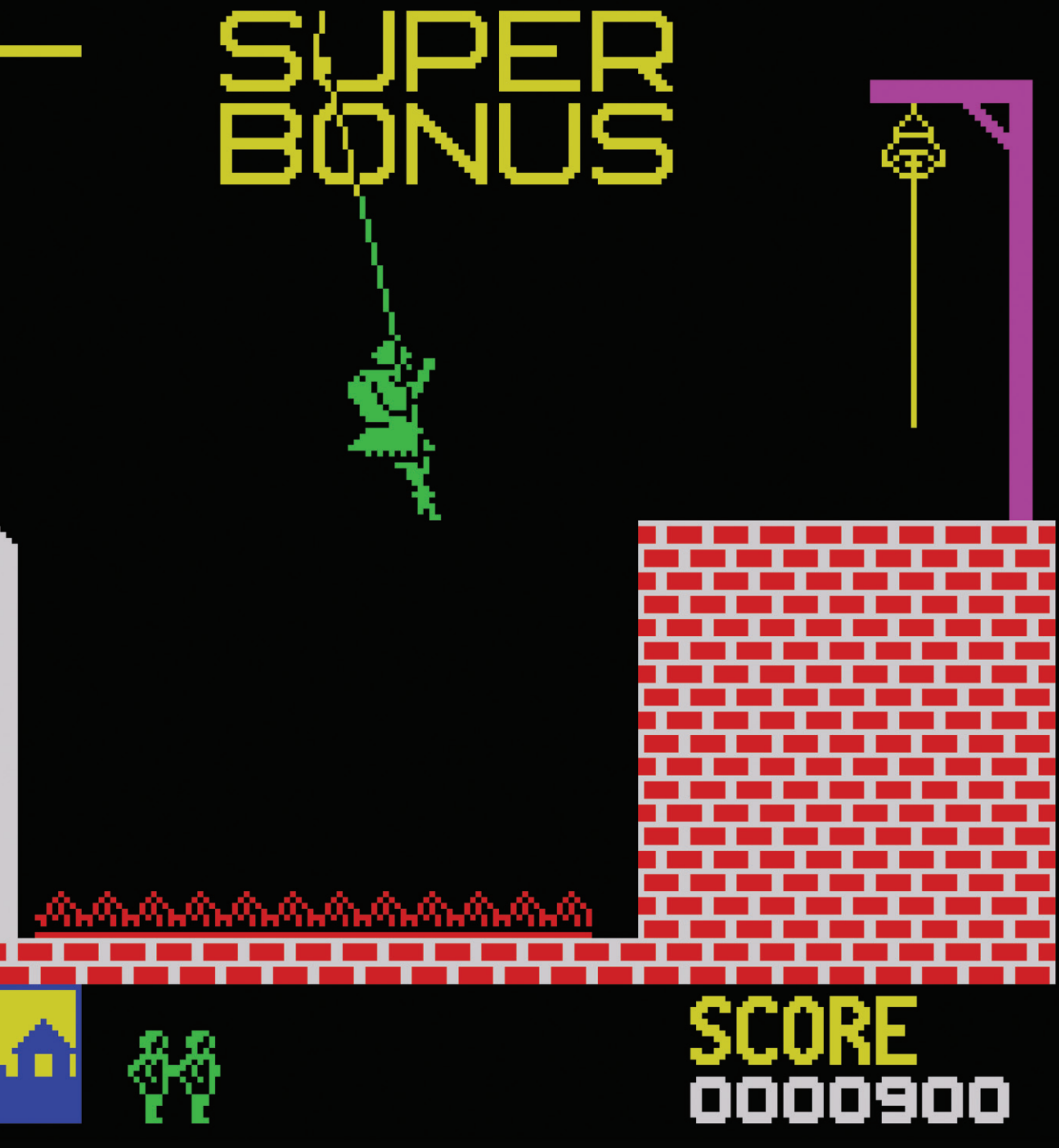
Name	:	Hunchback
Year	:	1984
Publisher	:	Ocean Software
Author	:	Paul Owens, Christian F. Urquhart, F. David Thorpe







Hunchback is one of the earliest arcade conversions on the ZX Spectrum, although the coin-op itself, from Century Electronics, is hardly well-loved. Nevertheless, Ocean secured the rights to the game, thus initiating a long and productive period of licensed games for the Manchester-based company. Playing Quasimodo, it's the player's somewhat frustrating task to rescue Esmerelda from a castle keep she's managed to find herself trapped in. There are ramparts to be traversed, arrows and fireballs to be dodged and an incessant, unforgiving guard that chases Quasimodo across each screen, ensuring the poor chap can't rest even for a moment. Hunchback is a simple and linear game, and considering it was already up against classics such as *Jet Set Willy*, *Brian Bloodaxe* and *Manic Miner*, it's a surprise it was the success it was. Yet Ocean, as was fast becoming customary, utilised all its promotional skills, and a superb advertising campaign no doubt greatly assisted the game's sales.



ACTIVISION
HOME COMPUTER SOFTWARE

Name	:	Ghostbusters
Year	:	1984
Publisher	:	Activision
Author	:	David Aubrey-Jones



ACTIVISION
PRESENTS
GHOSTBUSTERS™

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Columbia Pictures Industries,Inc
All rights reserved.
Ghostbusters music and lyrics
written by Ray Parker Jr.
© 1984 Golden Torch Music Corp.
and Radiola Music Corp.
Adapted by James Software Ltd.
Speech by David Aubrey Jones.

CONTROLLER MENU

SELECT NUMBER ON KEYBOARD

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2. SINCLAIR INTERFACE.
3. KEMPSTON INTERFACE.
4. CURSOR INTERFACE.

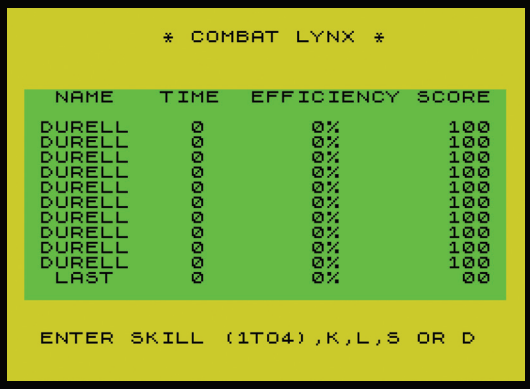


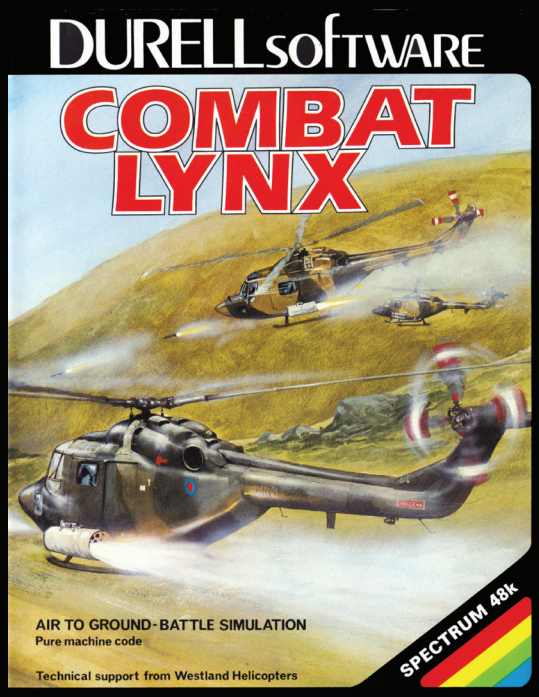
GHOSTBUSTERS! Or as it sounded on the Spectrum: 'Gaaarshbarsheeeees'. This was the game that sold a million Spectrums. Probably. But in all seriousness, the license of this hit movie was always going to be big news, and the game became one of the first major hits on the 8-bit computers. Based on an original design by David Crane, *Ghostbusters* falls into several parts. There's a resource allocation section where the player purchases a car and various bits of ghosthunting equipment. Then, a main city map to locate the ghosts before selecting one and driving off to capture it. Catching the errant spooks is a matter of positioning two 'catchers' correctly and trapping it with your proton beams. Should the wandering keymaster and gatekeeper meet, it is then off to a special location to defeat the squishy Stay Puft Marshmallow man. *Ghostbusters* captured the minds of thousands of Spectrum owners and was a huge success, despite several weaknesses, such as a lacklustre driving section.

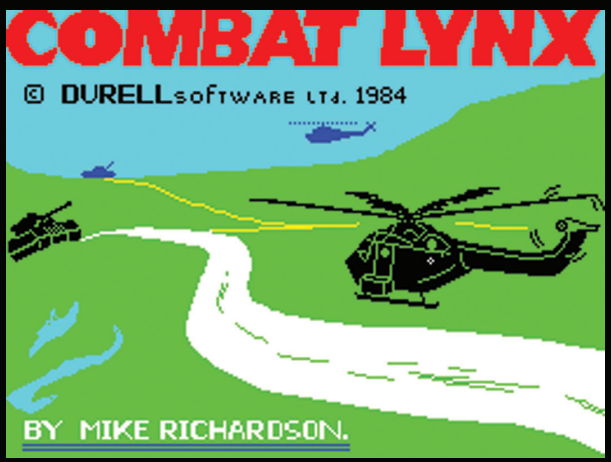


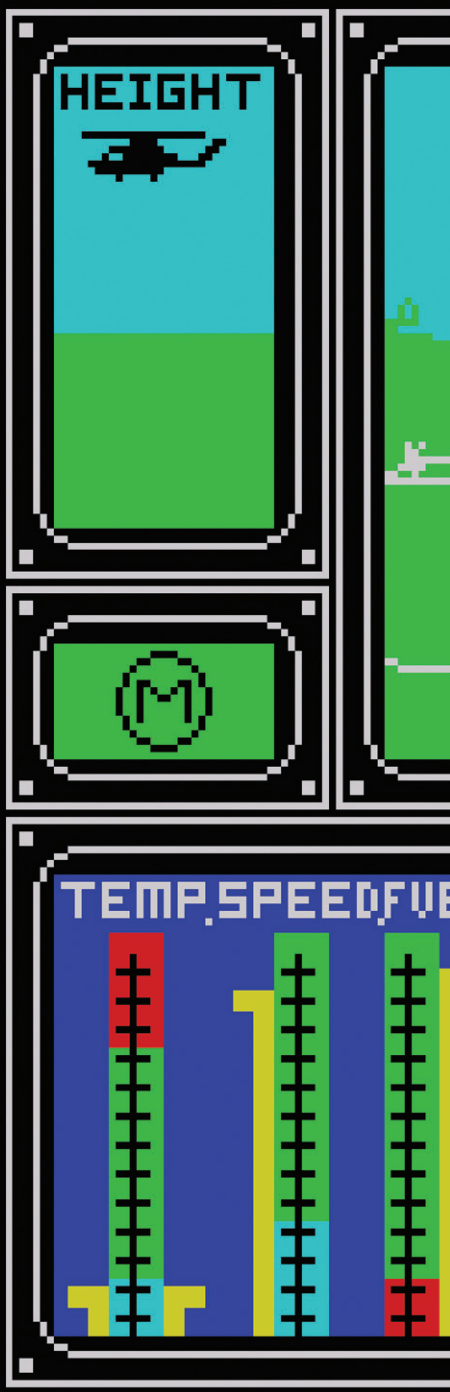
DURELL

Name	:	Combat Lynx
Year	:	1984
Publisher	:	Durell Software
Author	:	Mike A. Richardson

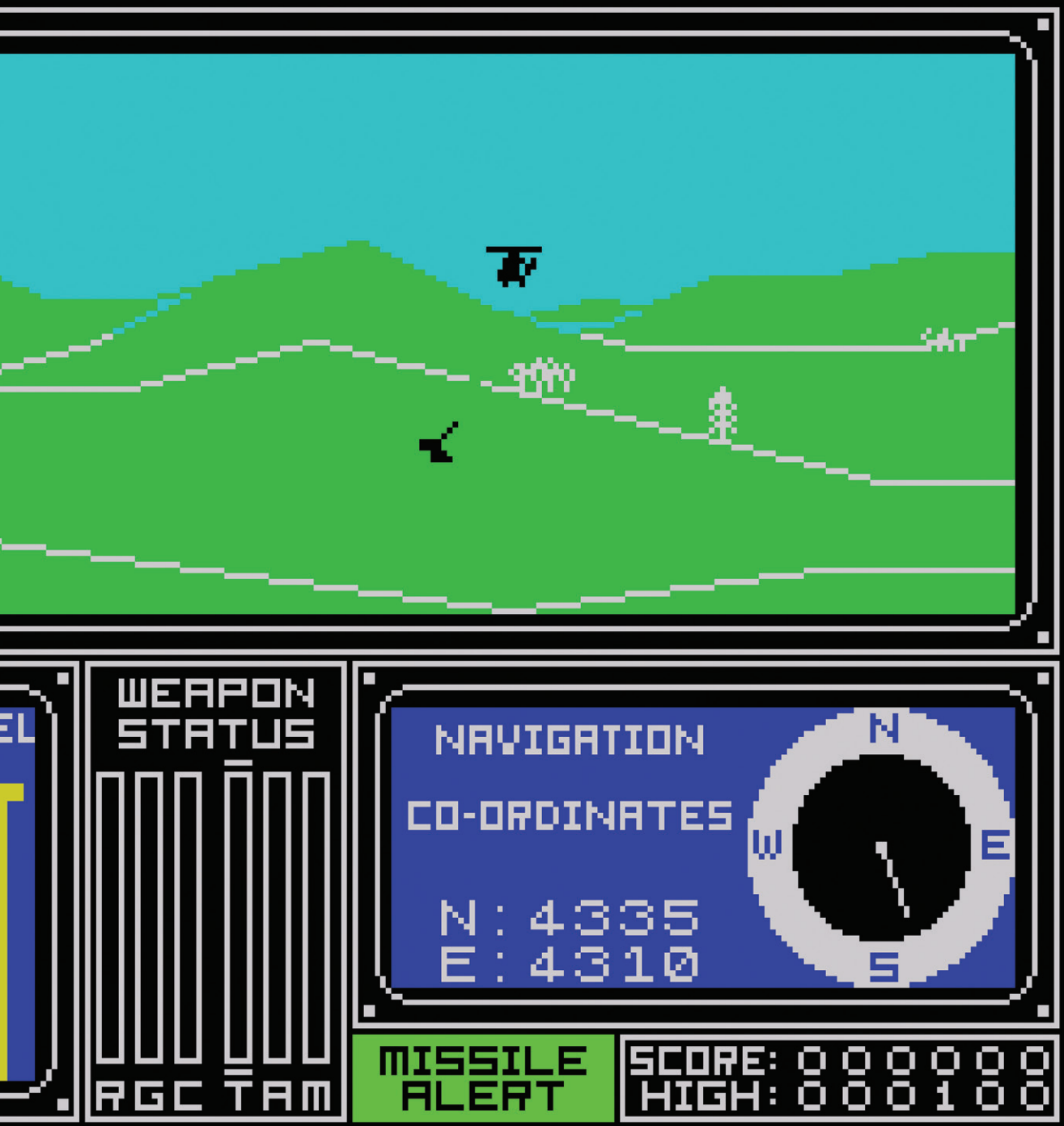








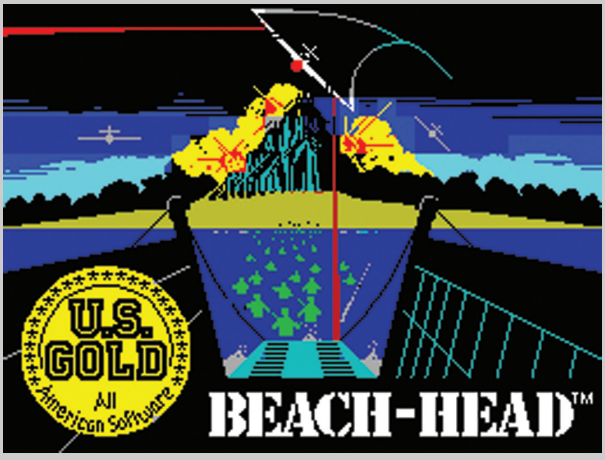
Combat Lynx is an admirable effort by Durell's Mike Richardson (who would go on to create the iconic *Turbo Esprit*) to blend two genres: flight simulation and shoot-'em-up. The game concerns a set of six bases that must be protected by the titular flying machine piloted, of course, by yourself. Depending on which difficulty level the player selects, the parameters of each mission and strength of your own ground forces vary. However, the objective is always the same: eliminate the enemy, both flying and ground-based, before they take out your forces and base. The simulation part of *Combat Lynx* is complex and contains a huge number of keys to master; but at the time, Digital Integration's Fighter Pilot aside, such complexity was unknown on the ZX Spectrum. The action elements of *Combat Lynx* did not really endear the game to shoot-'em-up fans, but it had an amazing depth. The player could select their weapons, balance fuel against armament and use different tactics to succeed in the mission.

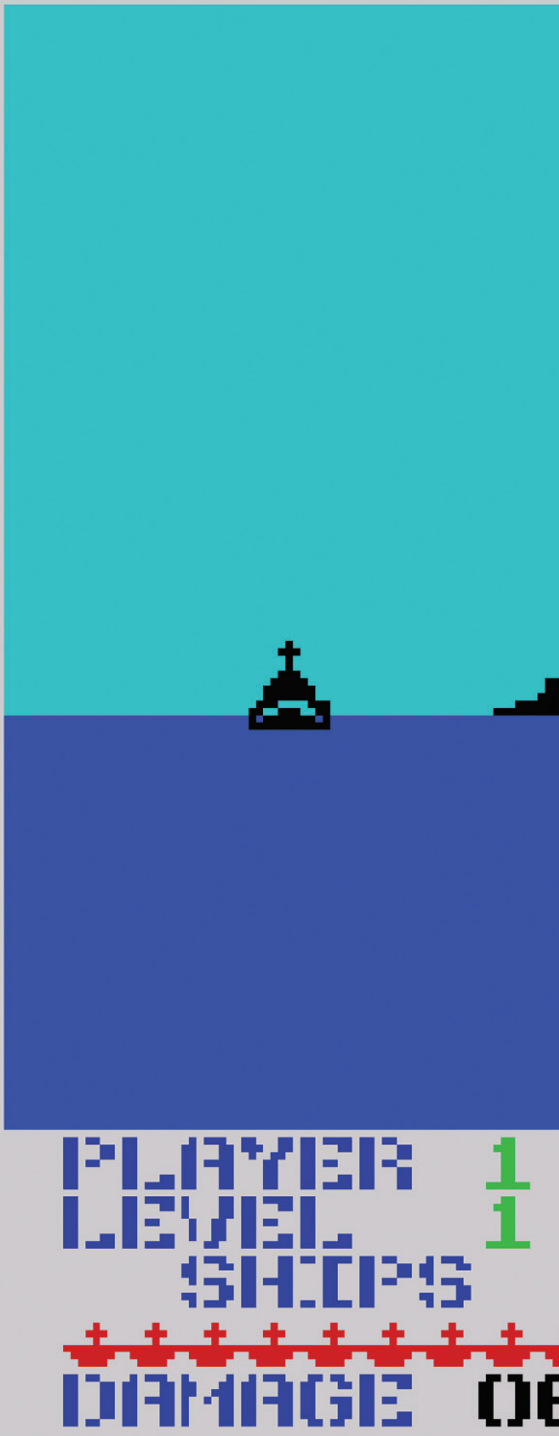




Name	:	Beach-Head
Year	:	1984
Publisher	:	US Gold
Author	:	David J. Anderson, Ian Morrison, F. David Thorpe



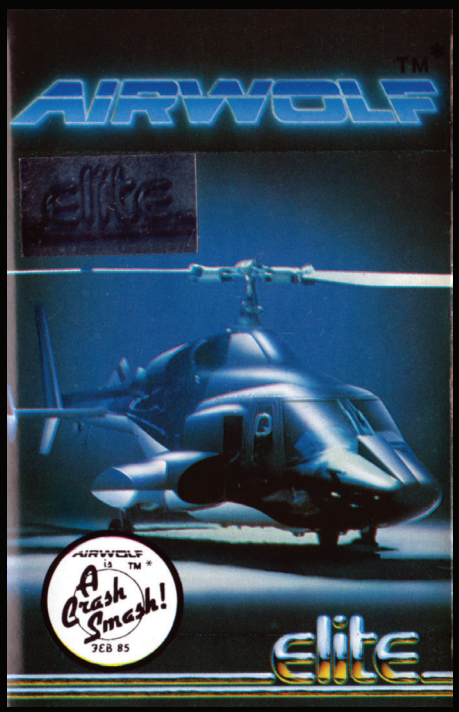




A conversion of the C64 hit game from Access, *Beach-Head* on the Spectrum was a joint effort between US Gold and Ocean. The game follows the original closely and features several different types of level, something of a rarity in 1984. Firstly, the player has to guide their fleet towards the enemy, either directly or via a 'secret passage'. The second stage requires careful negotiation of rocks, mines and torpedoes (if you took the secret passage) before your fleet is assaulted by enemy planes in a first person view. After fending off the fighters, it's time to have a pop at the enemy fleet, but quickly, as they are firing back, the cads! After landing at the title location, it's time to make your way through the final enemy defences and reach the big kahuna gun itself with the number of tanks for this level depending on how many ships made it through. Beach-head isn't a complex game, but it's a whole lot of fun and easy to see why it was such a hit in 1984.



Name : Airwolf
Year : 1984
Publisher : Elite Systems Ltd
Author : Richard Wilcox



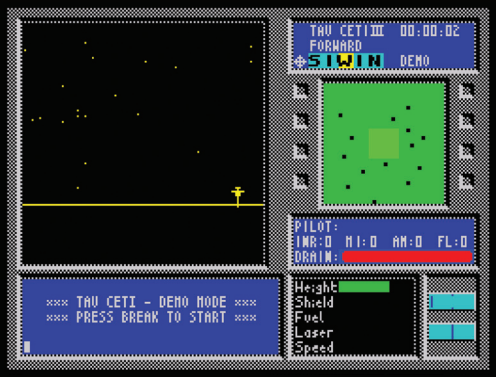






Back in 1984, the Airwolf license was a big thing for a relatively small publisher such as Elite – the TV series was extremely popular among the ZX Spectrum's demographic of young teenagers. Coded by Elite's Richard Wilcox himself, it's actually a decent effort although *Airwolf* has become notorious over the years as one of the toughest games on the Spectrum. Playing pilot Stringfellow Hawk, the CIA have called you in to rescue five missing scientists who are being held hostage in a heavily-fortified underground base. Hawk must negotiate defence fields and take out various control boxes in order to descend into the base. The sheer size of the helicopter plus the steep difficulty curve deterred many gamers, with even the opening screen's regenerating wall causing many to quit the game in frustration. While its reputation may be slightly exaggerated (there are plenty of YouTube videos that make the game look a lot easier to play than you might remember), it remains one of the tougher Spectrum experiences and is not recommended for beginners!

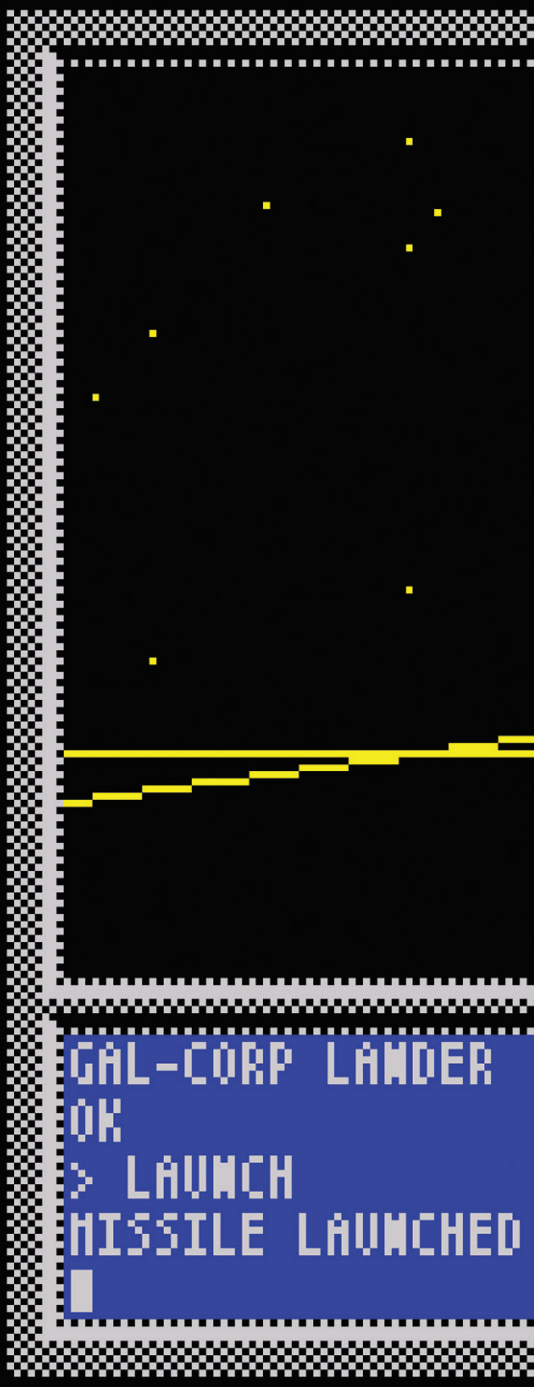




Name	:	Tau Ceti
Year	:	1985
Publisher	:	CRL Group
Author	:	Pete Cooke, Ian Ellery







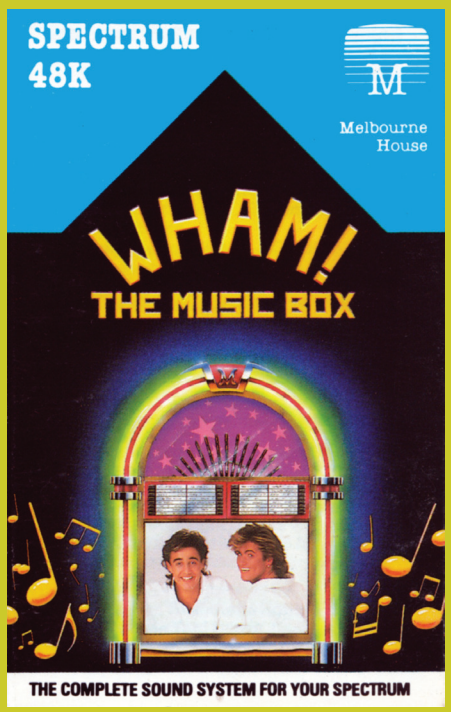
Like most of the Spectrum games by the incomparable master coder Pete Cooke, *Tau Ceti* began as a concept. A 3D maze game called *Gyron* had impressed him so much that he decided to create his own game using an advanced form of the shading techniques present in the Firebird effort. Transplanting the format to outer space, albeit various planet surfaces, gave Cooke the chance to experiment with different times of day and shadow effects. The result – infused with his love of classic science fiction novels – is one of the best sci-fi shooters on the ZX Spectrum. The player begins as a Gal-Corp pilot, sent to the colony of *Tau Ceti* which has recently gone silent. Once there, they discover its robot defence system has gone mad and shoots any intruder on sight. The only way to shut the robots down without destroying the colony is to send in a lone skimmer to collect the fuel rods necessary to disengage the reactor and restore order to the colony. *Tau Ceti* is a shoot 'em up at heart – but a beautiful, engaging, atmospheric and technically brilliant one.



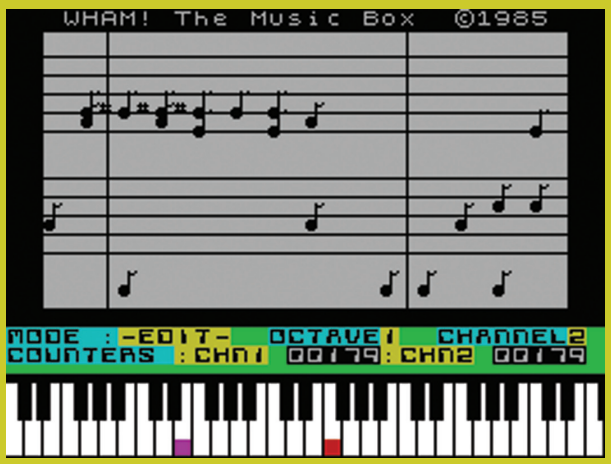
Melbourne House



Name	:	Wham! The Music Box
Year	:	1985
Publisher	:	Melbourne House
Author	:	Mark Alexander

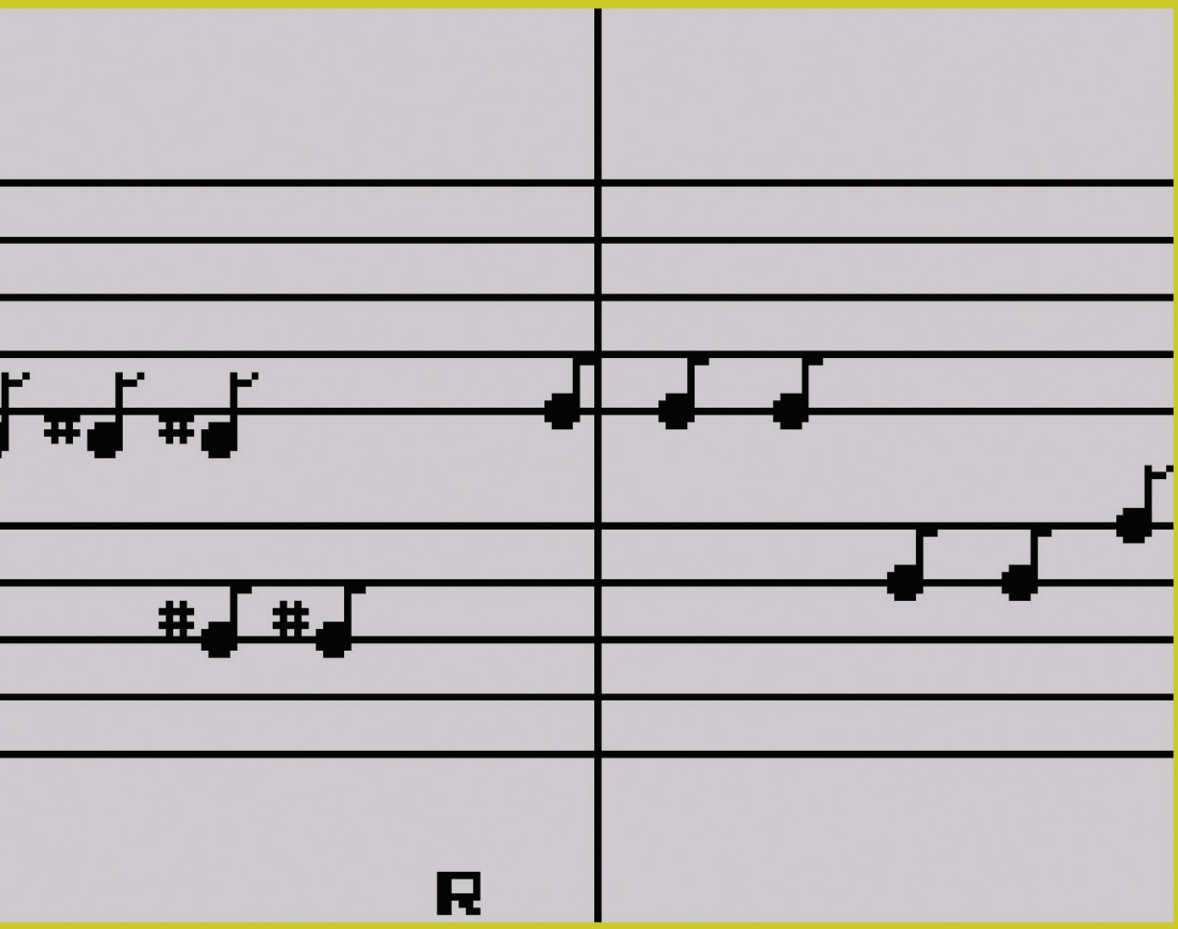






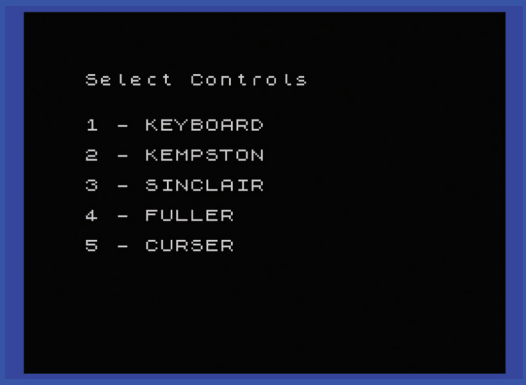


It wasn't at all uncommon for pop groups to lend their names to 8-bit computer games. Journey, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, Aerosmith, Michael Jackson and even Elvis have appeared in games. But 80s pop band Wham! went in a different direction. George and Andrew put their faces on a music application that allowed Spec-chums to begin creating their own Stock, Aitken & Waterman-style records. This was actually a pretty decent music composing program that included options to add a bass line, drums (in a looping pattern, if required), four octaves and a white noise generator. Admittedly the drums and the white noise are pretty much the same thing, but for the sound-starved Spectrum it was a valiant effort. It even compiled completed music for use in your own games. Five Wham! tracks were included to show you just what *The Music Box* could achieve, and more than a few contemporary game musicians have credited this program for getting them started in making digital music and forging a career in the games industry of today.





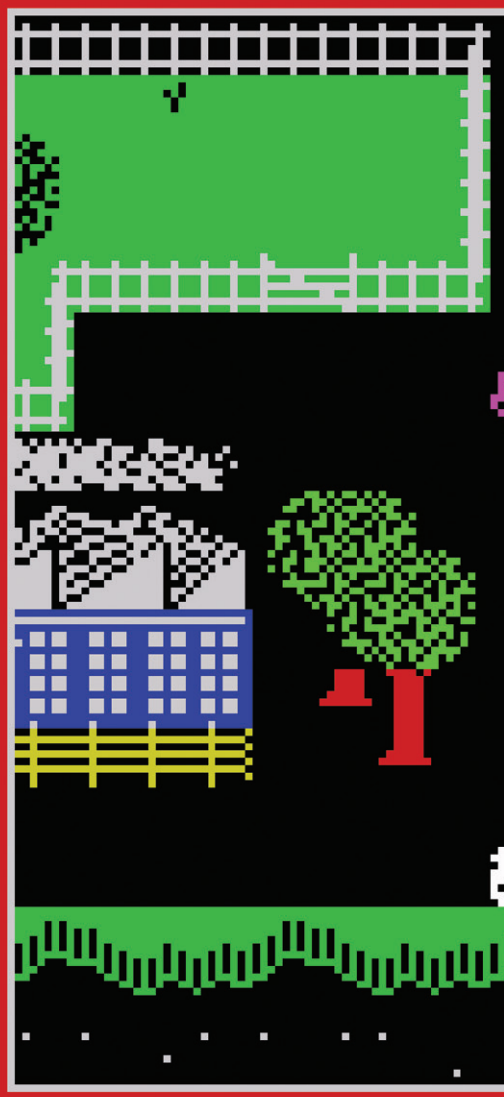




Name	:	Action Biker
Year	:	1985
Publisher	:	Mastertronic
Author	:	M.J. Child









In 1986, Mastertronic teamed up with KP Skips and its 'Clumsy Colin' character to produce this unusual license for the home computers. The Commodore 64 got a nice isometric-style racer that proved popular with reviewers and the public; unfortunately Spectrum owners got something a bit different. In a somewhat ludicrous plot, Clumsy Colin is asleep and having a dream about taking his friend to the spaceport. Hidden within his subconscious suburbia are 50 items which will help Colin achieve his task, and they have to be collected before his alarm goes off at 8am. Run out of fuel or energy and Colin wakes up and the game is over. Despite its cheap price tag, there simply isn't enough to do in this game. Biking around the town and entering the various houses is ok for a while, but with 150 locations to explore to find just 50 items, and nothing to actually do within each house, it quickly becomes tiresome. Nevertheless, the pocket money price of *Action Biker* ensured an impressive amount of the game were sold.









Name	:	Enigma Force
Year	:	1985
Publisher	:	Beyond Software
Author	:	John Heap, Karen Davies, Simon Butler



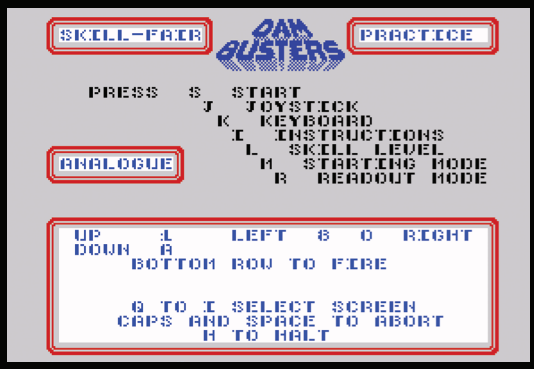




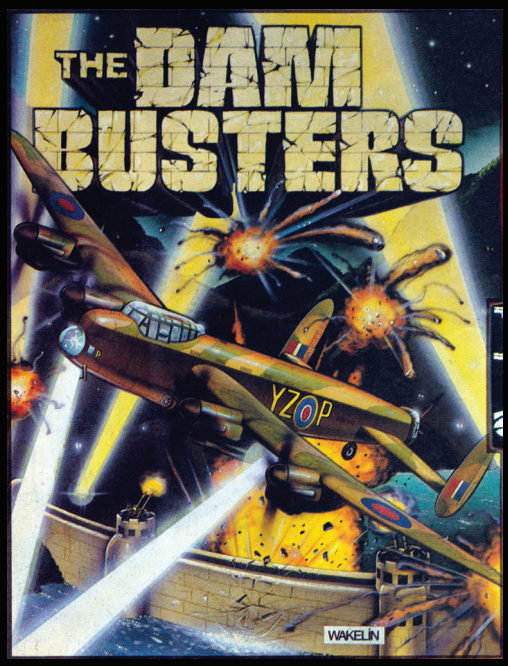


The sequel to the excellent, yet polarising *Shadowfire*, this game was every bit as accessible to newcomers as it was to fans of the series. And it brought a lot more to the table, including an action view screen that showed the four large, beautifully animated *Enigma Force* characters working to reacquire the evil General Zoff while caught in the middle of a war. But to the amazement of gamers everywhere, you weren't moving these characters around directly. Each one had their own special skills, and shortcomings, and your mission demanded you make use of the entire team if you wanted to reacquire the nefarious Zoff. This was achieved by queueing up commands from a wide roster of icons at the bottom of the screen. Each member of *Enigma Force* could have five commands lined up at any one time, such as activating an object, moving around the isometric environments, reloading a weapon, shooting at enemies and so much more. This was a complex game, to be sure, and its strict time limit made it viciously difficult. But the ingenuity of its design was a thing of beauty.

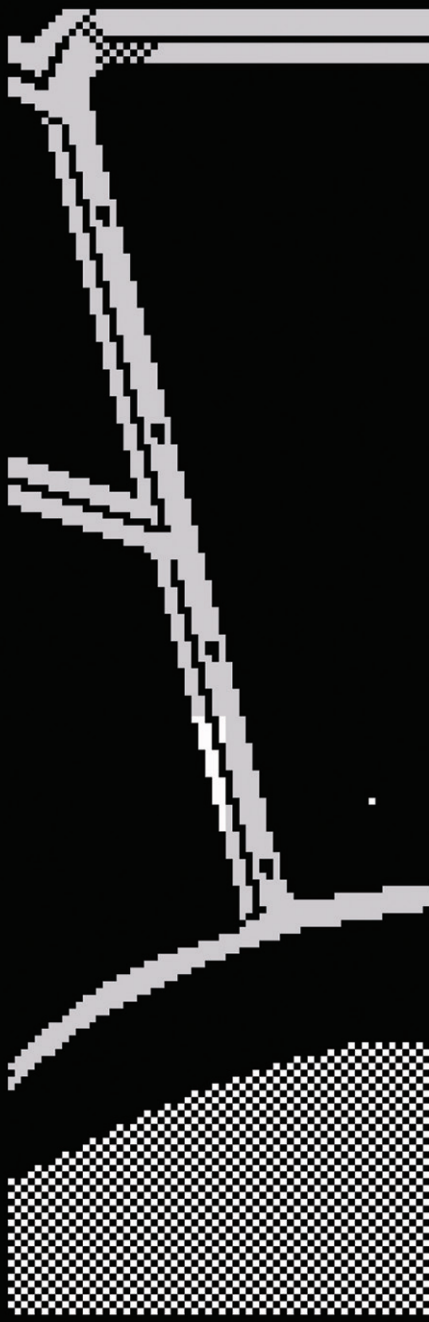




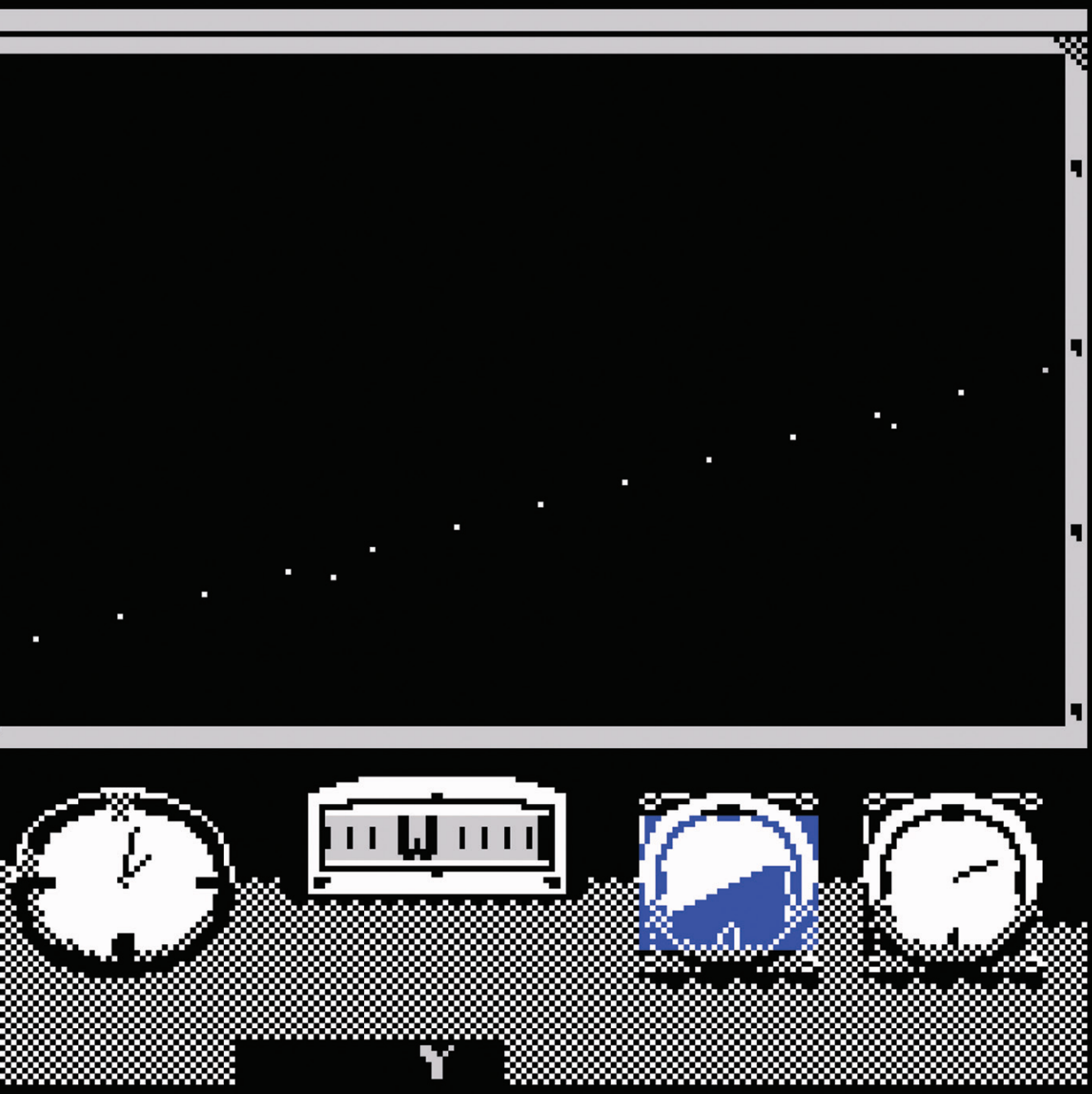
Name	:	The Dam Busters
Year	:	1985
Publisher	:	US Gold
Author	:	David J. Anderson, Ian Morrison, Eric Coates, Robin Muir), F. David Thorpe







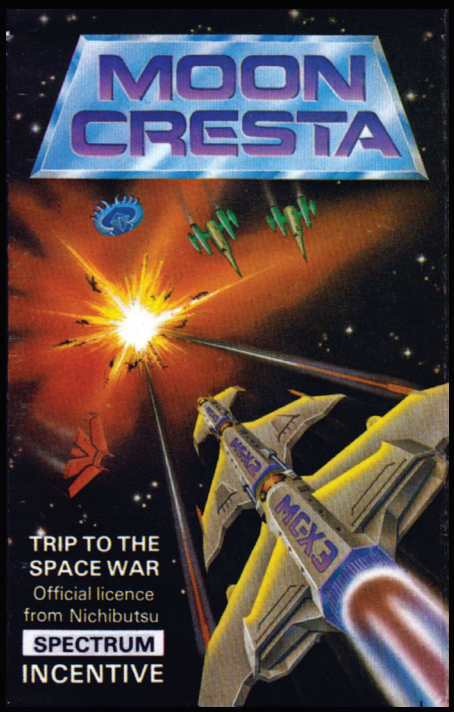
One of US Gold's regular developers, Platinum Productions (*Zaxxon*, *Tapper*) was entrusted with the Spectrum interpretation of this famous World War II mission, Operation Chastise. Their main task was how to make every element of the game exciting, with the obvious culmination being the bombing of the dams. To achieve this, the player takes complete control of a Lancaster bomber en route to Germany. There are eight screens to select and each one represents a certain facet of the bomber, from pilot and engineer to bombardier and rear gunner. Gunners must defend the plane from fighters and barrage balloons; the engineers monitor the engines, and can extinguish fires, while the navigator sets the course and the pilot ensures they keep to it. Unfortunately it's far from a classic thanks to sparse graphics (the view is black, with just a dotted line for the horizon), a lack of action and frustration at enduring a boring flight to Germany only to fall at the last hurdle due to the tricky task of lining up the bomb against the dam.





INCENTIVE

Name	:	Moon Cresta
Year	:	1985
Publisher	:	Incentive Software
Author	:	Timothy Walter, Philip Taglione, Pete Carter







There were plenty of arcade conversions around before Incentive released this slightly-creaking shoot-'em-up in 1985, but other than Ocean's *Hunchback*, not many of them were officially licensed. When Incentive Software boss Ian Andrew was pondering on new angles to mark his software house out from the crowd in 1984, he hit upon the idea of trying to acquire the license for the popular *Moon Cresta* from Nichibitsu. Andrew revealed in 2011 that the UK branch of the arcade company were so surprised that anyone would want to licence the game that they had no idea on an actual value. When he mentioned a figure of £1000 off the top of his head, the deal was swiftly done. The game itself is a decent conversion with the same snappy gameplay and a well-judged difficulty level, and despite its simplicity, *Moon Cresta* reviewed well and helped give Incentive the push to go on to bigger and more ambitious projects.



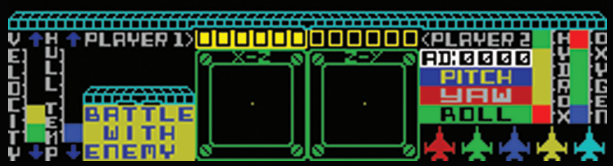
Melbourne House



Name	:	Starion
Year	:	1985
Publisher	:	Melbourne House
Author	:	David M. Webb

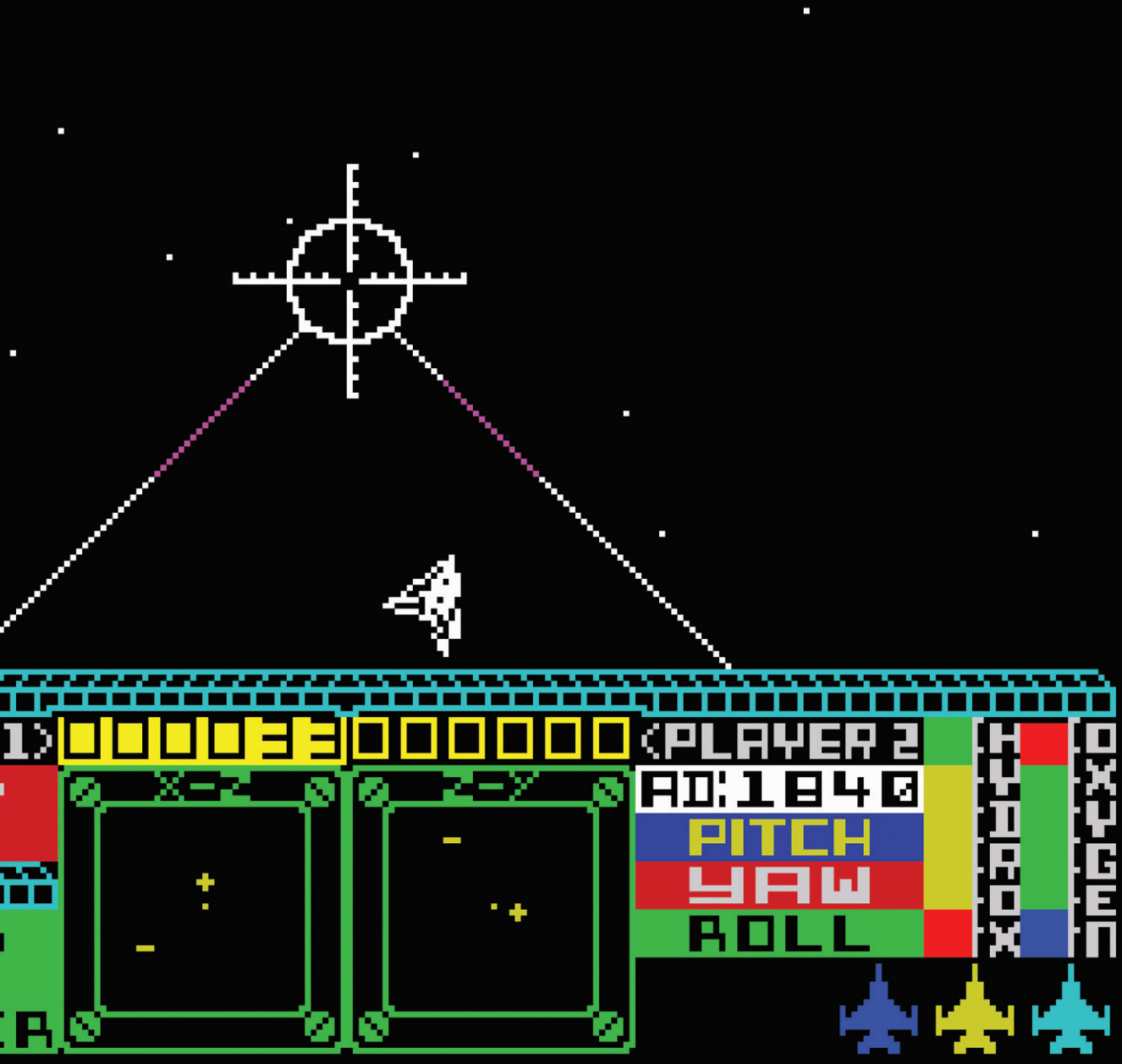




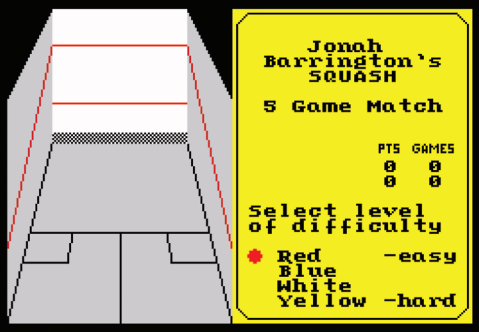




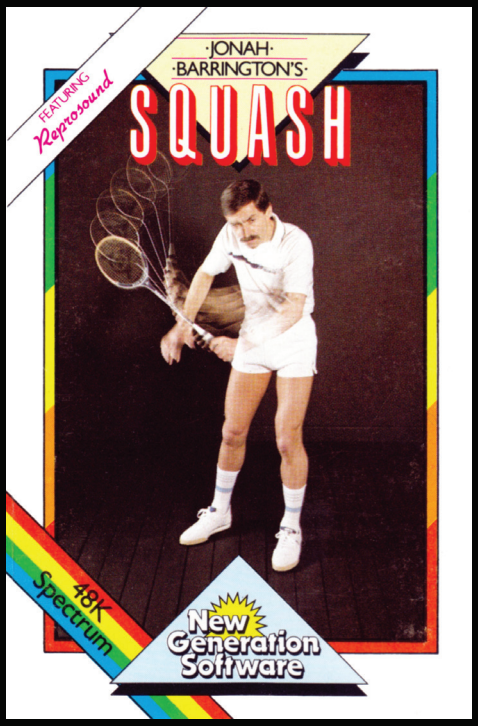
In *Starion* you play the title role, and as such you are tasked with saving the universe from evil aliens, hell-bent on altering history. Luckily, you are kitted out with a swish time travelling spaceship which you use to patrol unfriendly regions of space, destroying enemy ships and stealing their cargo which is made up of letters. This unlikely sounding cargo is actually the crux of the game, namely to collect said letters, which when unscrambled form a word. The word is a clue associated with a certain time zone, and you will need to then return them to the time zone they were stolen from. Easy peasy I hear you shout, but consider this; *Starion* has 243 time zones. Get it wrong and you will have to find enough fuel (by destroying enemy ships) to get back out and try over. Convoluted plotline and its obvious graphical similarity to *Elite* aside, this game is an absolute gem, fluid 3D wireframe graphics and a clean, uncluttered cockpit view making this game worthy of its Crash Smash status.



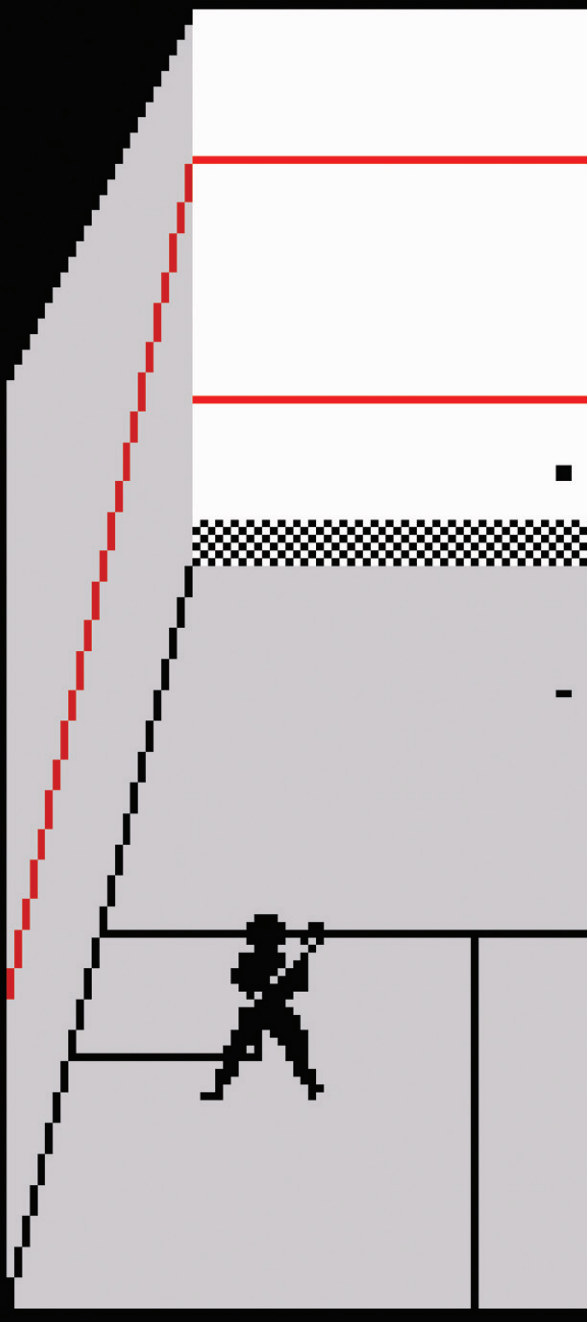
New Generation Software



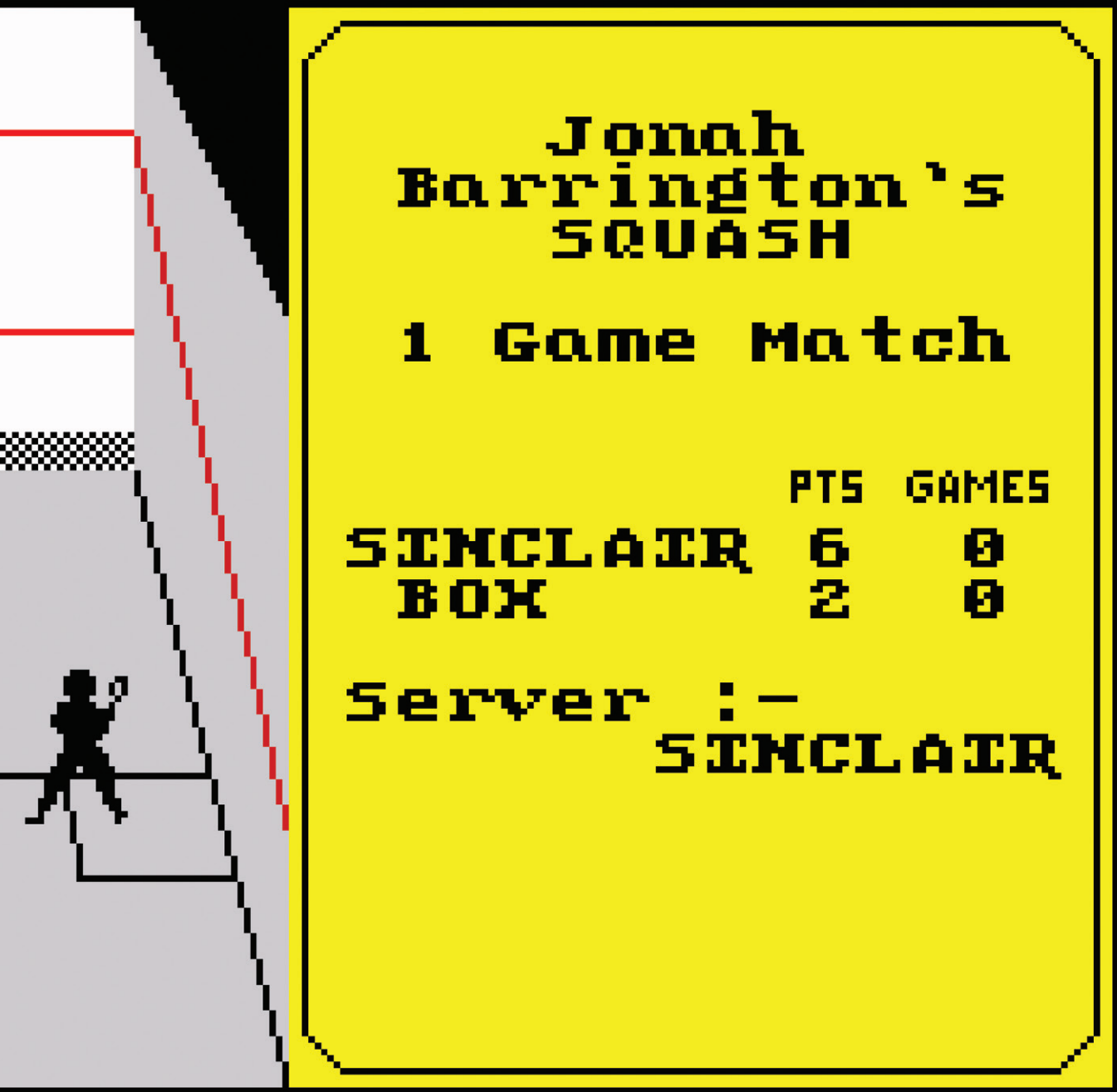
Name	:	Jonah Barrington's Squash
Year	:	1985
Publisher	:	New Generation Software
Author	:	Malcolm E. Evans







Malcolm Evans' New Generation Software only released one licensed game, and while squash may be an uncommon subject for the Spectrum, Evans himself made a decent effort in recreating the racquet sport. His brother, Rod, was a keen fan of the sport and suggested to his brother that they translate it to the small screen. The most well-known British player of the era was Barrington, and securing his name was a relatively simple task for the small software house. The game itself boils the sport's complexities to a predictably straightforward, yet playable interpretation. Players take turn serving and a backhand or forehand shot is determined by the position of the player in relation to the ball. The timing of the player's swing affects the speed, and all this is achieved by merely pressing the fire button. Perhaps the most famous part of the game was its speech which was used with a technique called 'Reprosound'. In a recent interview Evans admitted this was a glorified term for a simple method of converting soundwaves.



Electric Dreams SOFTWARE

I OF THE MASK

© SANDY WHITE 1985

SANDY WHITE & ANGELA SUTHERLAND
Guest appearance by PAUL FIK

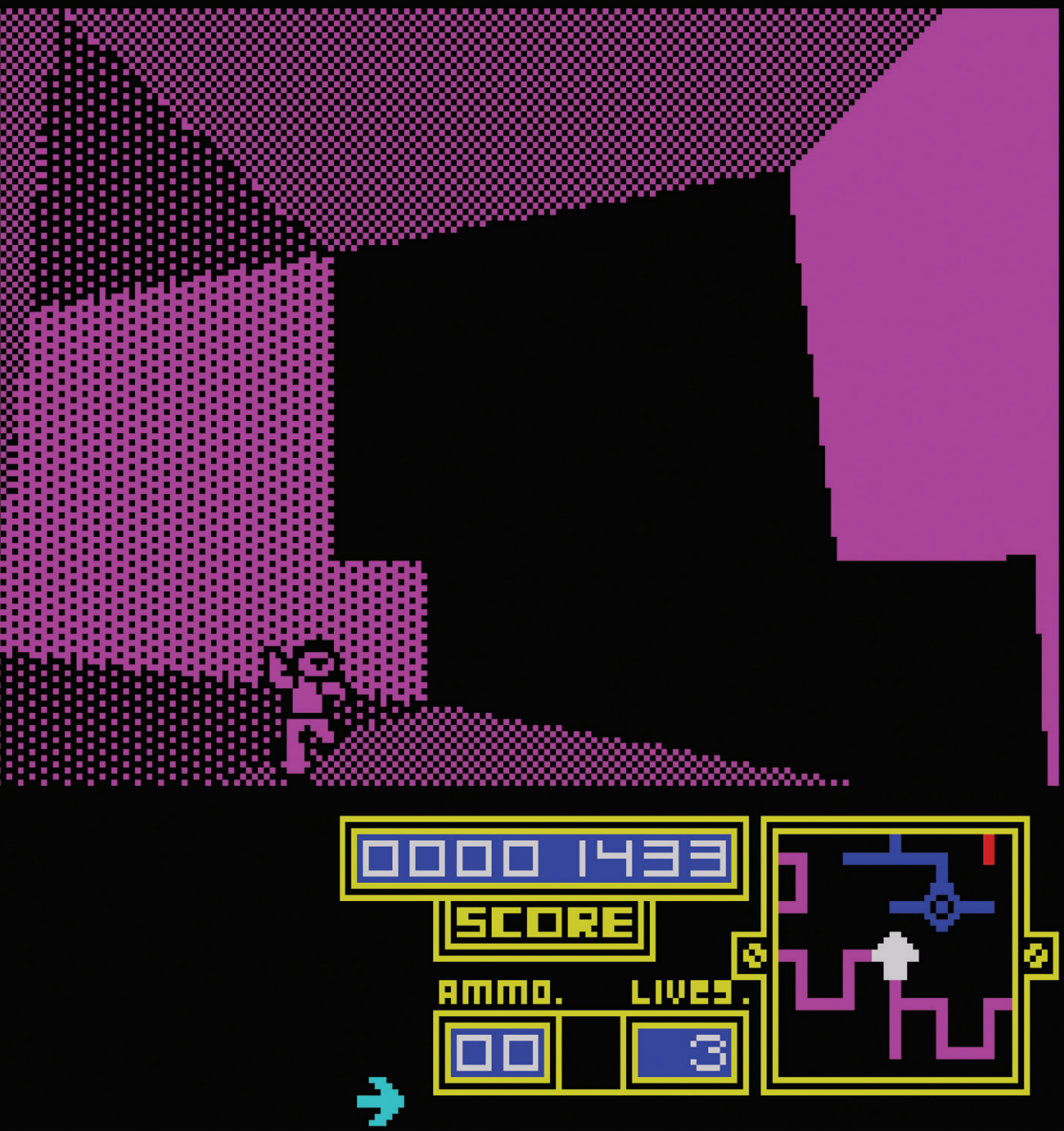
J - JOYSTICK OPTION / S - START

Name	:	I, of the Mask
Year	:	1985
Publisher	:	Electric Dreams
Author	:	Sandy White, Angela Sutherland, Paul Fik





Sandy White and Angela Sutherland may not have had the success with this game as they did with *Ant Attack*, yet it's just as technically impressive, if not more so. *I, Of The Mask* involves a set of trials on a planet called Newgamma III. Dropped into a labyrinthine maze with just your cunning and a jet pack, the mission is to find three crystals hidden within each maze. Shoot one of these crystals and it reveals a robot part; collect enough parts and the player can use the fully-constructed mechanoid to escape the maze. The parts must be collected in order, starting with the feet and concluding with the Mask. *I, Of The Mask* is a massive game, and negotiating your way around the monochrome mazes can be very disorientating. The graphics themselves are startling, especially for 1985; the maze moves impressively fast, with the central figure nipping around corners with remarkable agility. Yet only the most committed and skilful gamer would ever come close to finally becoming 'of the mask'.





bubble bus software

WIZARDS LAIR

1. KEMPSTON JOYSTICK
2. CURSOR JOYSTICK
3. SINCLAIR ZX2 JOYSTICK
4. KEYBOARD ... OPAQM
5. KEYBOARD ... QWERT
6. KEYBOARD UDK ... 67890
7. DEFINE YOUR OWN KEYS
0. PLAY THE GAME
9. QUIT

© S. J. CROW. 1985

Name	:	Wizard's Lair
Year	:	1985
Publisher	:	Bubble Bus
Author	:	Stephen J. Crow

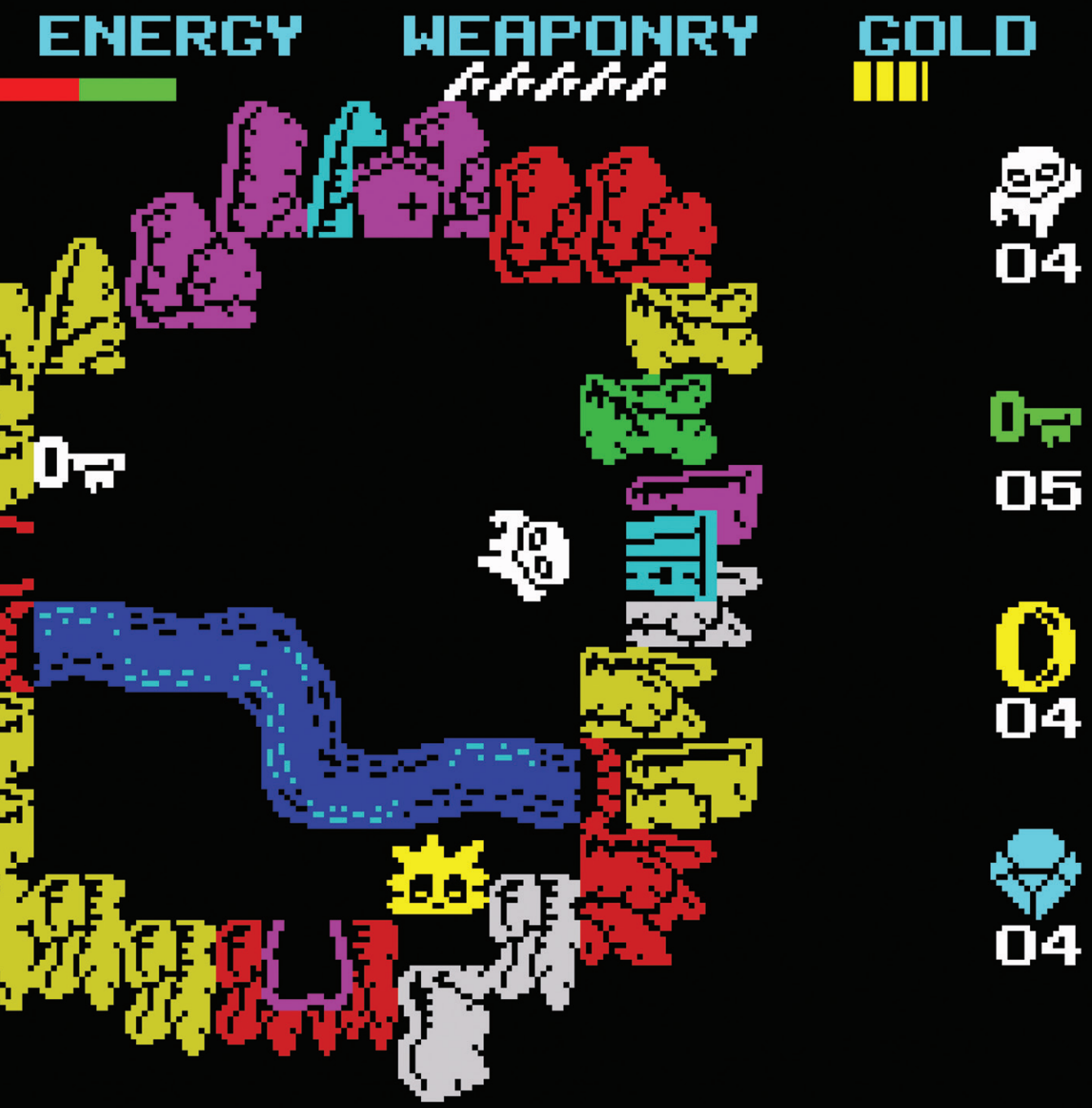
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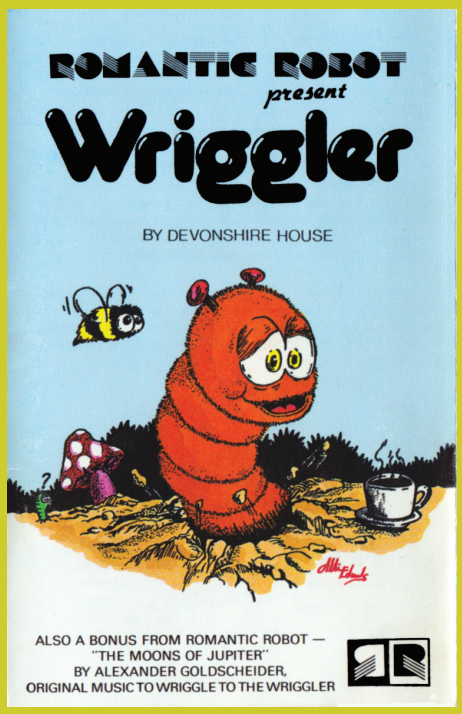
When *Wizard's Lair* was released and went out to review, it suffered due to its overwhelming visual similarity to *Sabre Wulf*. Gamers of the day just couldn't see past the blatant cloning, and struggled to appreciate its unique charms. Okay, those charms might not have been many, but now that we care a lot less about ripping off *Sabre Wulf*, *Wizard's Lair* reveals itself to have been a great entry into the explore-'em-up genre. Viewed from above, the game was vibrantly colourful and full of detail as you, Pothole Pete, attempted to find a way out of the titular wizard's lair. It featured a number of unique elements, not least of them being able to move up and down through the levels of the lair using lifts, and wardrobes. The rooms would open and close their exits at random, trapping you inside with snakes and all manner of beasties, or encouraging you to locate the hidden doors secreted within the colourful vegetation and walls. It'll always remain in the shadow of games it borrowed from, but still deserves its own recognition.



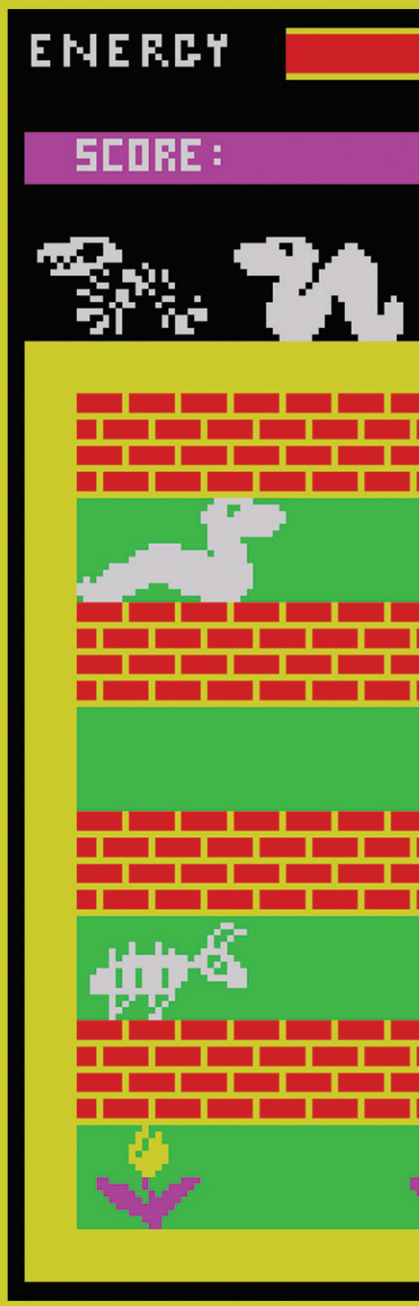
ROMANTIC ROBOT



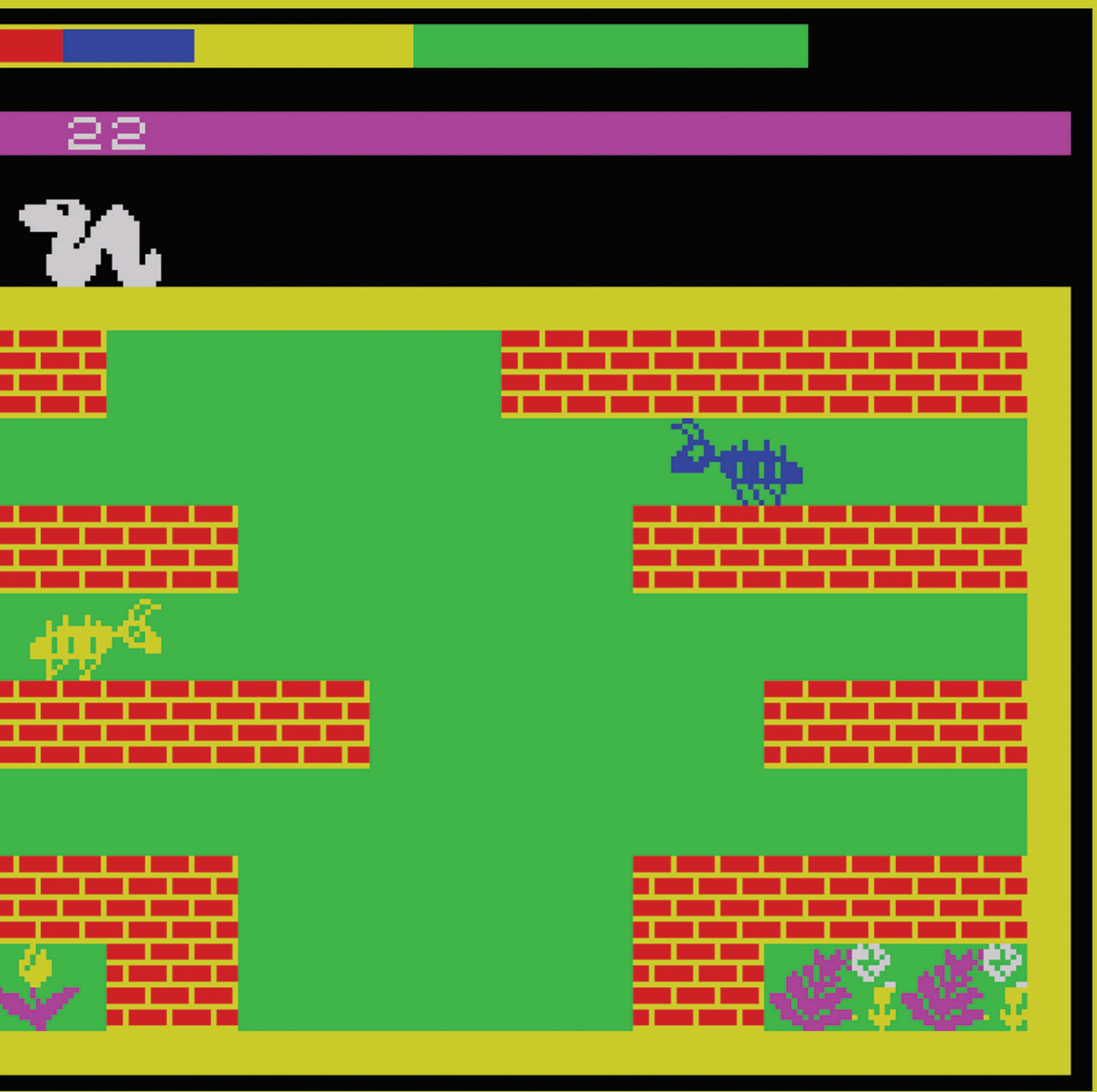
Name	:	Wriggler
Year	:	1985
Publisher	:	Romantic Robot
Author	:	Devonshire House

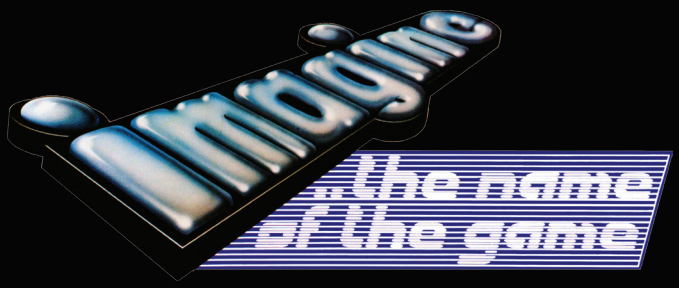






Romantic Robot was chiefly renowned for its game-cracking hardware such as the Multiface One. *Wriggler* was its sole software release on the ZX Spectrum, and written by two brothers from Cornwall named Matthew and Allin Kempthorne-Ley-Edwards. Heavily influenced by the famous Ultimate classic *Sabre Wulf*, Matthew handled the heavy coding duties while future cartoonist Allin designed the game's jovial characters and maze.In what must have been a gaming first, the player takes control of a maggot, an idea born when Allin created an animated cartoon worm and asked his brother to work it into a game. The boys expanded this initial concept into a maggot race which takes place in several different regions, from the bucolic scrublands and garden to the somewhat more macabre dungeons and underground. *Wriggler* is a tough game to complete, and is a fantastic effort to squeeze its many screens into the 48k Spectrum, especially for a pair of 14-year old boys with little experience in programming. But undoubtedly what most gamers will remember is the spider, a delightfully spindly and evil-looking creature that causes instant death to your maggot should its skeletal legs touch it.







Name	:	Yie Ar Kung-Fu
Year	:	1985
Publisher	:	Imagine Software
Author	:	Brian Beuken, F. David Thorpe, Martin Galway





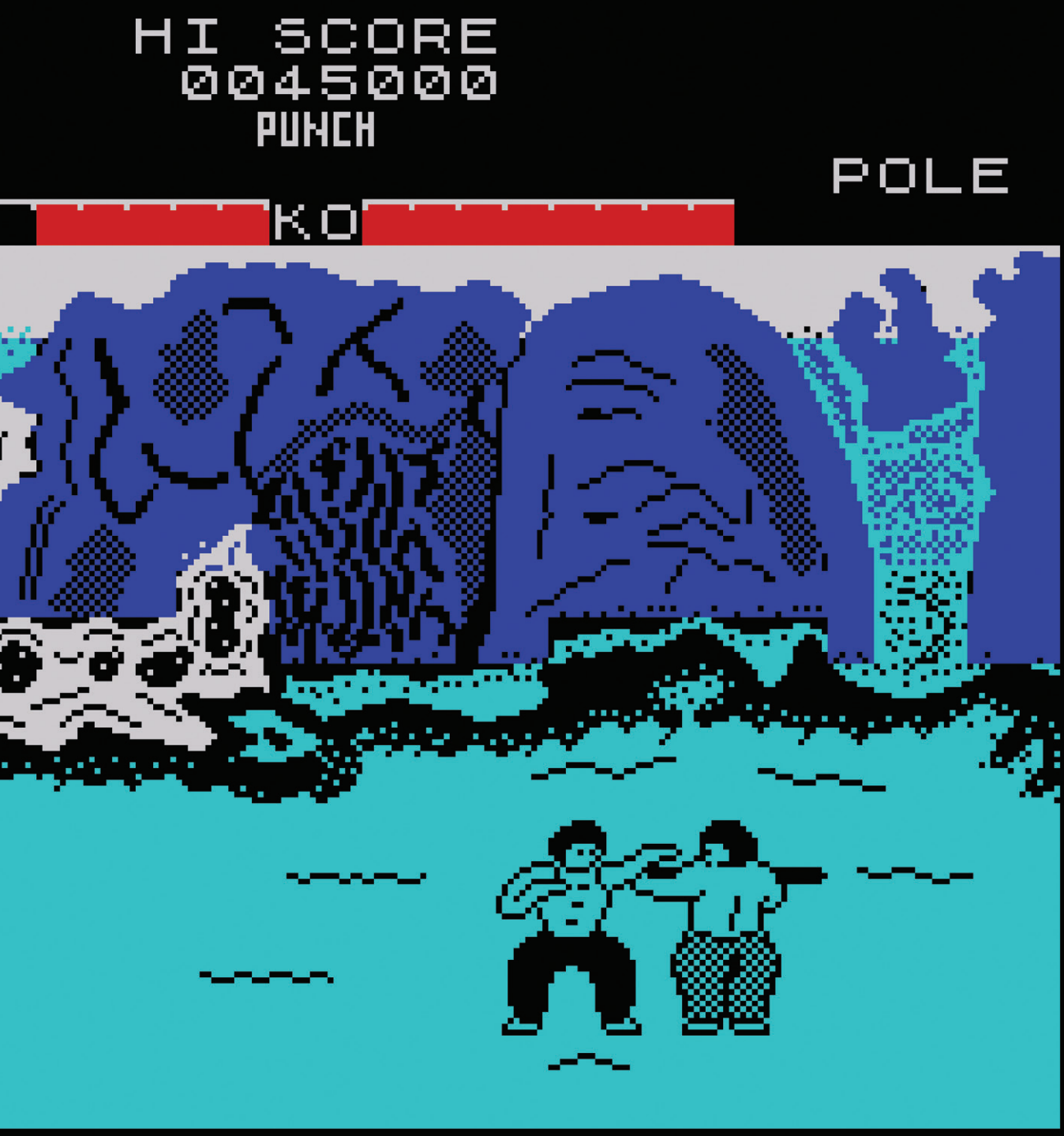


Yie Ar KUNG~FU



©Konami®

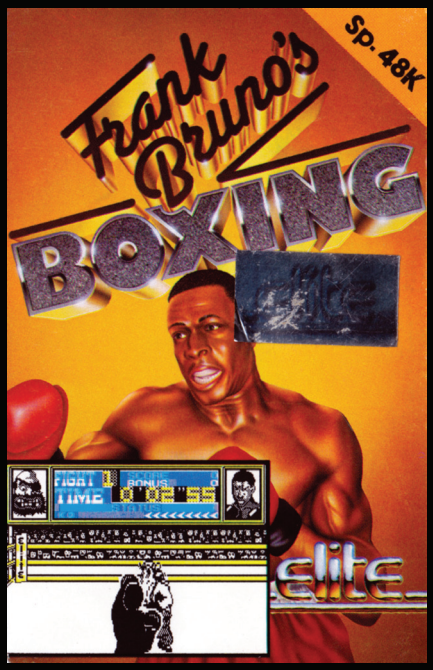
This arcade conversion was one of the first batch of titles that established Ocean's newly-acquired Imagine label as a force to be reckoned with. Following on from the success of Melbourne House's *Way Of The Exploding Fist*, *Yie Ar* is another one-on-one fighter, albeit with a greater variety of opponents. First up is the beefy Buchu, who belies his great size by flying through the air to attack the player, whose name – Oolong – makes him sound like an exotic brand of tea. Taking on various enemies, many brandishing weapons including throwing stars, clubs and swords, Oolong progresses until face-to-face with the kung-fu master himself, Blues. The fighters themselves are monochrome, but very well-defined and animated, and there are even a couple of tunes to keep you company. One area that the game was criticized was its ease: most experienced gamers would likely beat all the opponents in a short time, and whilst the challenges do get stiffer, by then you have seen all the game had to offer.



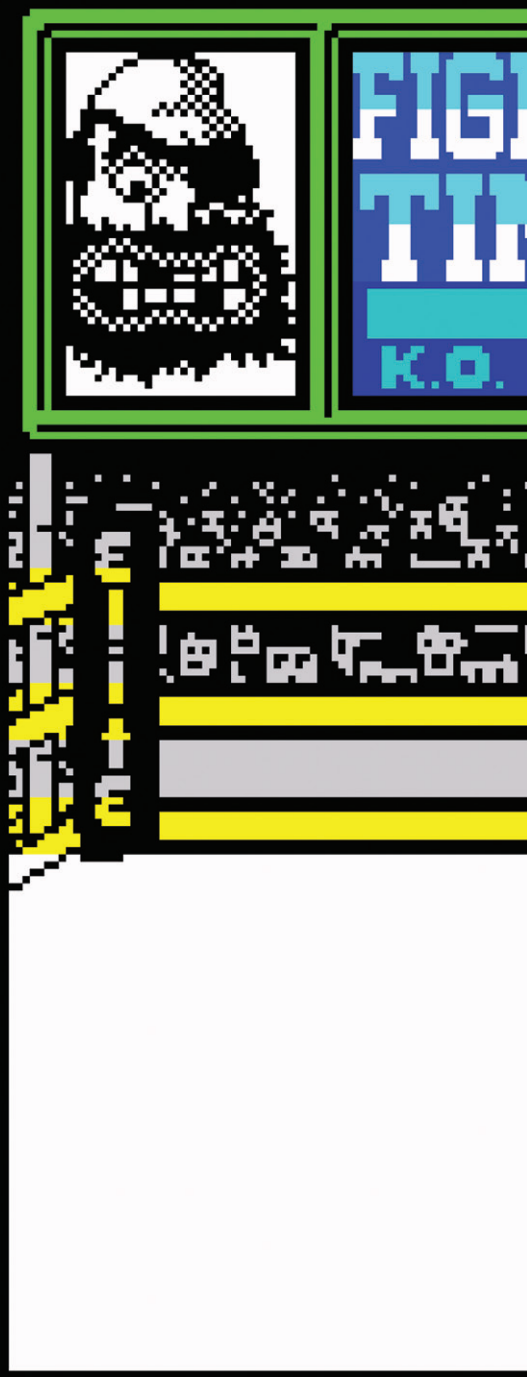




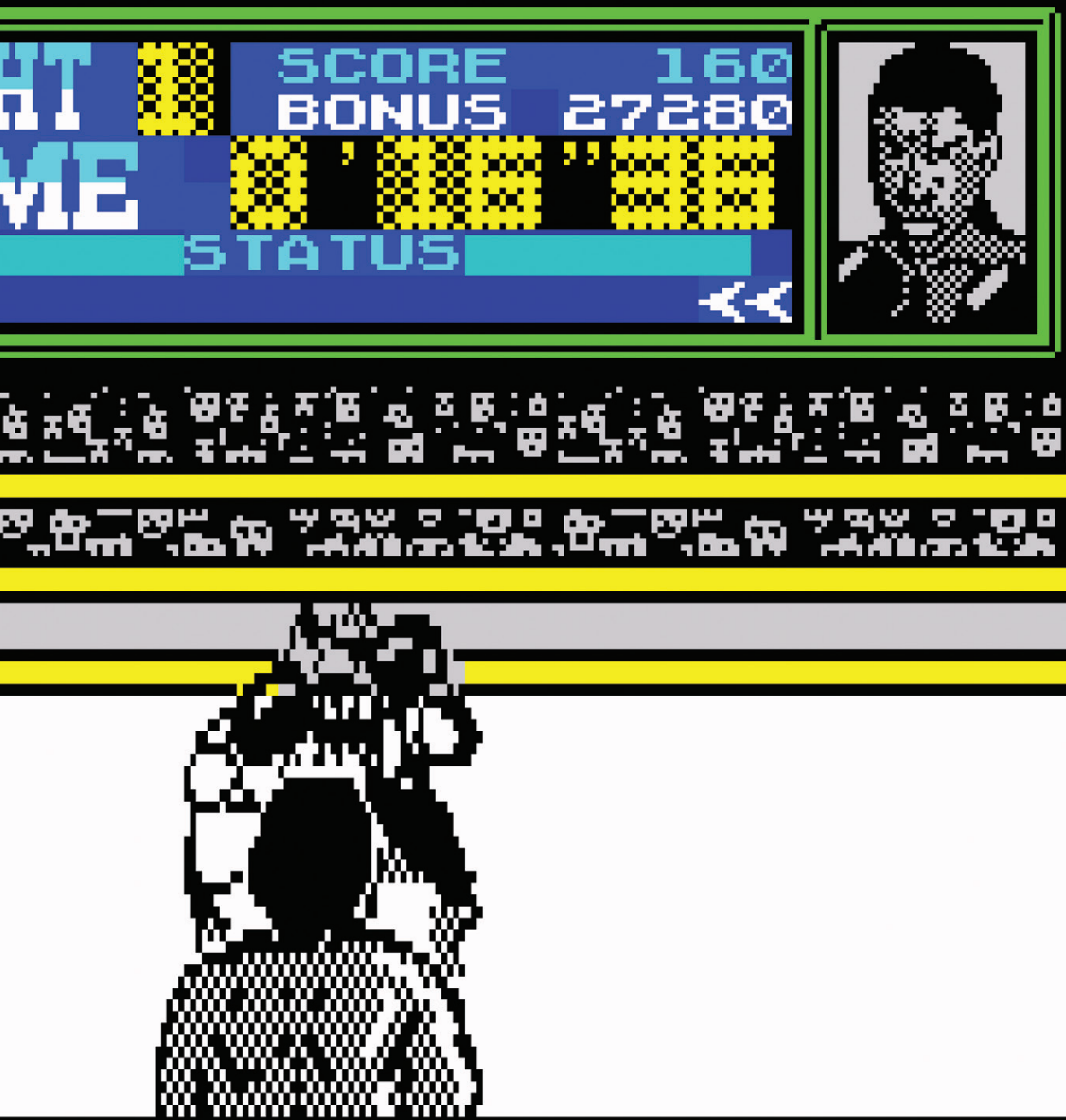
Name	:	Frank Bruno's Boxing
Year	:	1985
Publisher	:	Elite Systems Ltd
Author	:	Andy Williams, Trevor Perks, Paul Holmes, Gary Priest, Rory C. Green





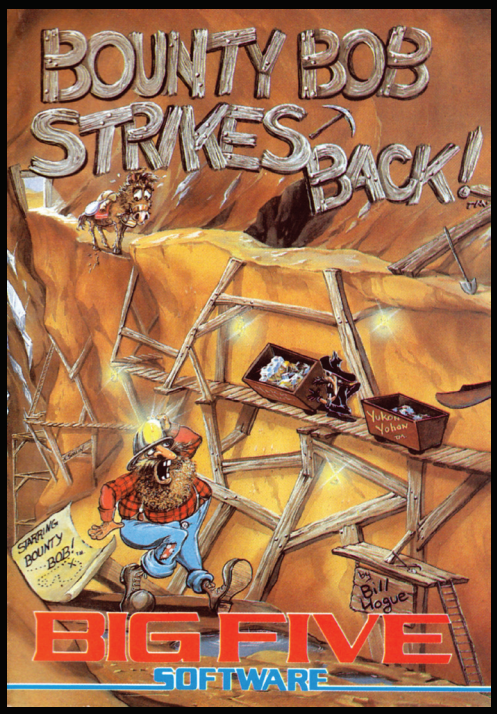


Boxing games were all the rage back in 1985 and Elite joined the digital ruckus with this decent port of *Super Punch-Out!!* featuring the back of our man Frank's head instead of Little Mac's. Gameplay consists of dealing your opponent blows in the form of left and right head punches as well as body blows whilst dodging punches or ducking, the ultimate aim of which is to wear your opponent down enough for Frank to either get a knock down or deliver a knock out blow. Mr. Bruno and his opponent are both shown at the top of the screen with health bars which decrease or increase depending on their success in landing blows. When enough blows are landed in quick succession, arrows on the KO meter build to such a point where you are given the opportunity to land the decisive punch with either an upper cut or right hook. Eight characters are available to fight with each being loaded individually from the tape using a code gained when winning matches. The best of the bunch when it comes to pugilism on the Spectrum.

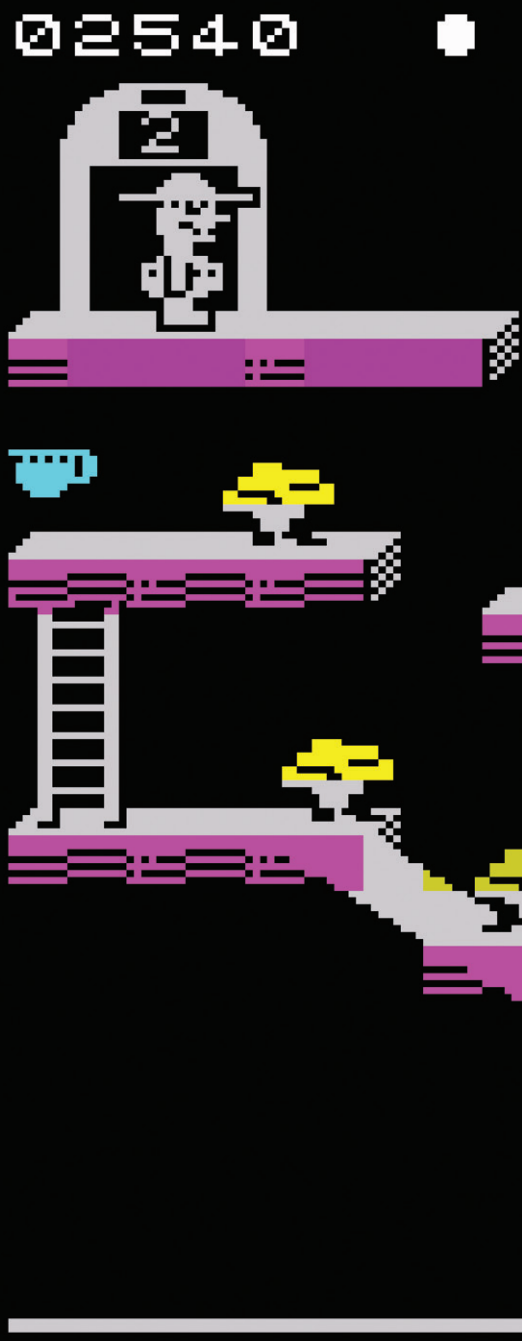




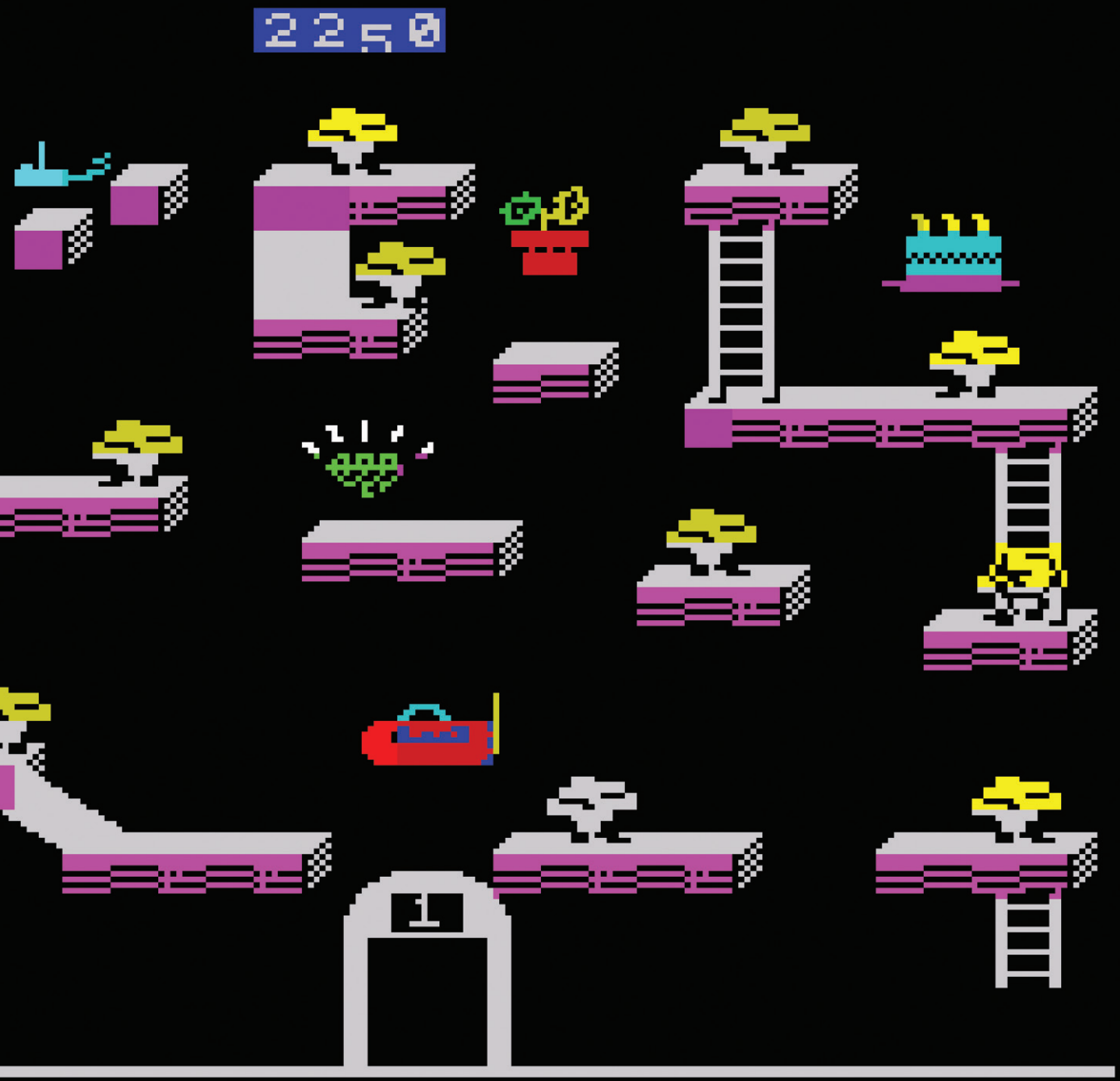
Name	:	Bounty Bob Strikes Back
Year	:	1985
Publisher	:	US Gold
Author	:	Bill Hogue, Tim Miller, F. David Thorpe







The platform game genre was still holding on for grim life in 1985, despite generally having been done to death on the Spectrum since the release of Matthew Smith's *Manic Miner* in 1983. US Gold brought this sequel to the Atari hit *Miner2049er* (which itself might have *cough* influenced the aforementioned classic) to the Spectrum two years later and backed by the full force of its promotional powers, created a big hit. The purpose of the game is to claim each part of the mine's framework for Bob. Within each mine are a bunch of mutant organisms that have overrun the place and must be avoided. To help Bob get about are slides, lifts and energy bars that give him greater jumping powers; against him lay not only the organisms (created when normal creatures meet nuclear waste) but also droplets of acid and pulverisers, left over from a demolished aluminium recycling centre. *Bounty Bob* offers nothing new to an old genre, but is a neat, if often frustrating game.



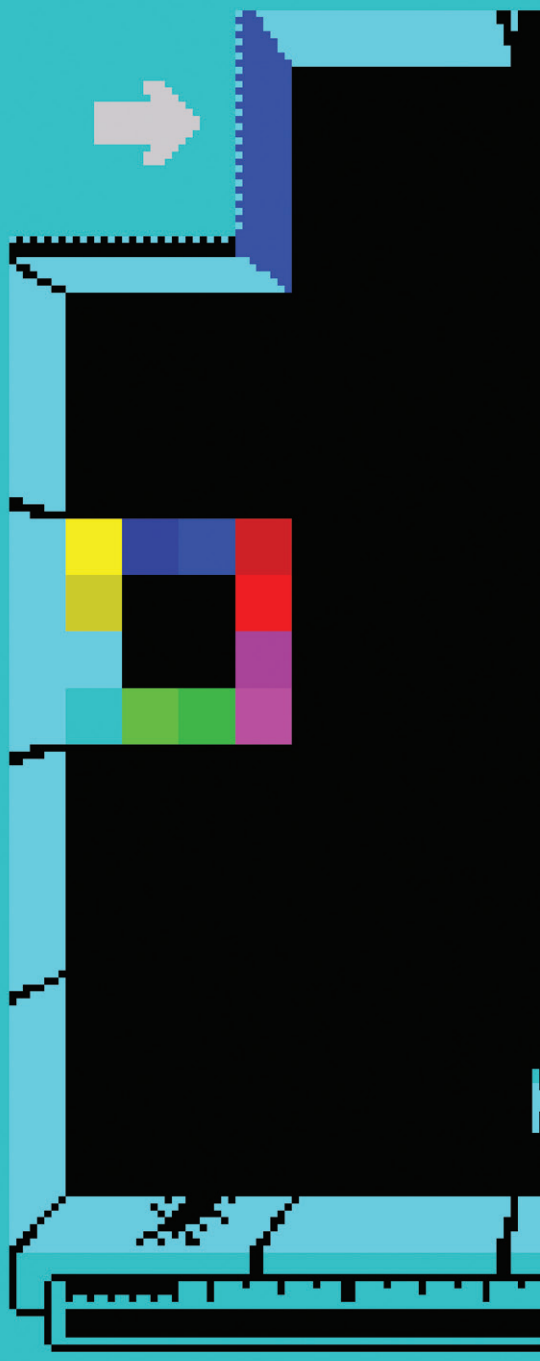
DOMARK



Name	:	Splitting Images / Split Personalities
Year	:	1986
Publisher	:	Domark
Author	:	Ruud Peske, Ernest Peske, Mark Strachan, David Whittaker







For what is essentially a sliding block puzzle game, *Split Personalities* received much attention back in 1986. This was because not only is it an excellent game with superb presentation, but because its original title, *Splitting Images* – while apt – drew attention from the legal department of a certain satirical television show. Each level begins with an empty playing area and the player controls a cursor which is used to manipulate the picture blocks that slide out from the side every time fire is pressed. Each tile represents part of a bigger picture that must be arranged in the correct order to proceed. These pictures include politicians of the time such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, to celebrities Mick Jagger and Sir Clive Sinclair. Occasionally bomb tiles are spat out and these must be disposed of in super quick time via one of the holes that appears around the edge. *Split Personalities* is not the most complex of games, but its sheer playability and originality at the time ensured it became a big hit for Domark.





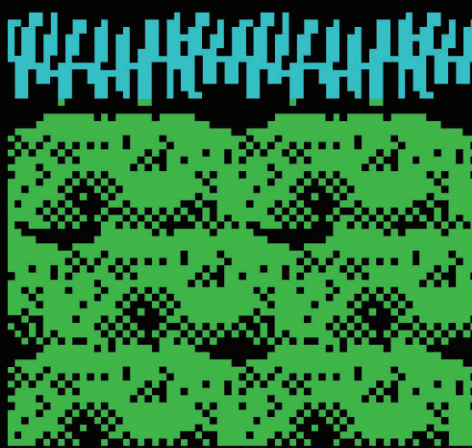


Name	:	Ghosts 'n Goblins
Year	:	1986
Publisher	:	Elite Systems Ltd
Author	:	Keith Burkhill, Nigel Alderton



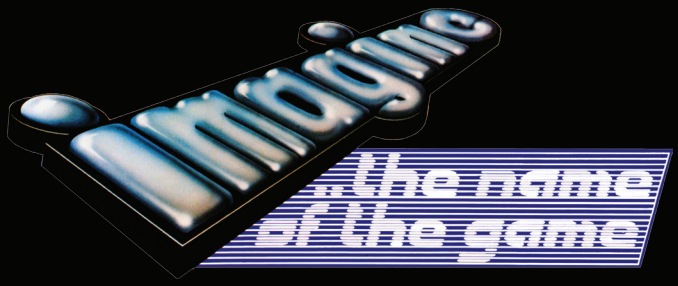






This arcade game was another Capcom smash hit – could Elite replicate its success with *Commando* and come up with another home conversion classic? Well, yes, despite some obvious limitations and technical adjustments. Playing in monochrome, *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* tells a familiar story. Brave knight Arthur is about to propose to the love of his life when an evil demon swoops down and kidnaps her right before his eyes. Arthur must set off across a nicely-scrolling landscape, avoiding and eliminating a variety of monsters. He is protected with his trusty suit of armour, but should it take a hit, it disappears. As Arthur scampers around in just his fetching long johns, one more hit and its curtains. Elite's programmer Keith Burkhill did a fine job of converting *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* with Arthur moving precisely and the game pushing along at a fair lick. Sure, it's rock hard, but with some memorisation of the enemy patterns, clever usage of the weapons and a large slice of persistence, *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* is certainly beatable.









Nichibutsu

Name	:	Terra Cresta
Year	:	1986
Publisher	:	Imagine Software
Author	:	Jonathan M. Smith, Ronnie Fowles, Martin Galway





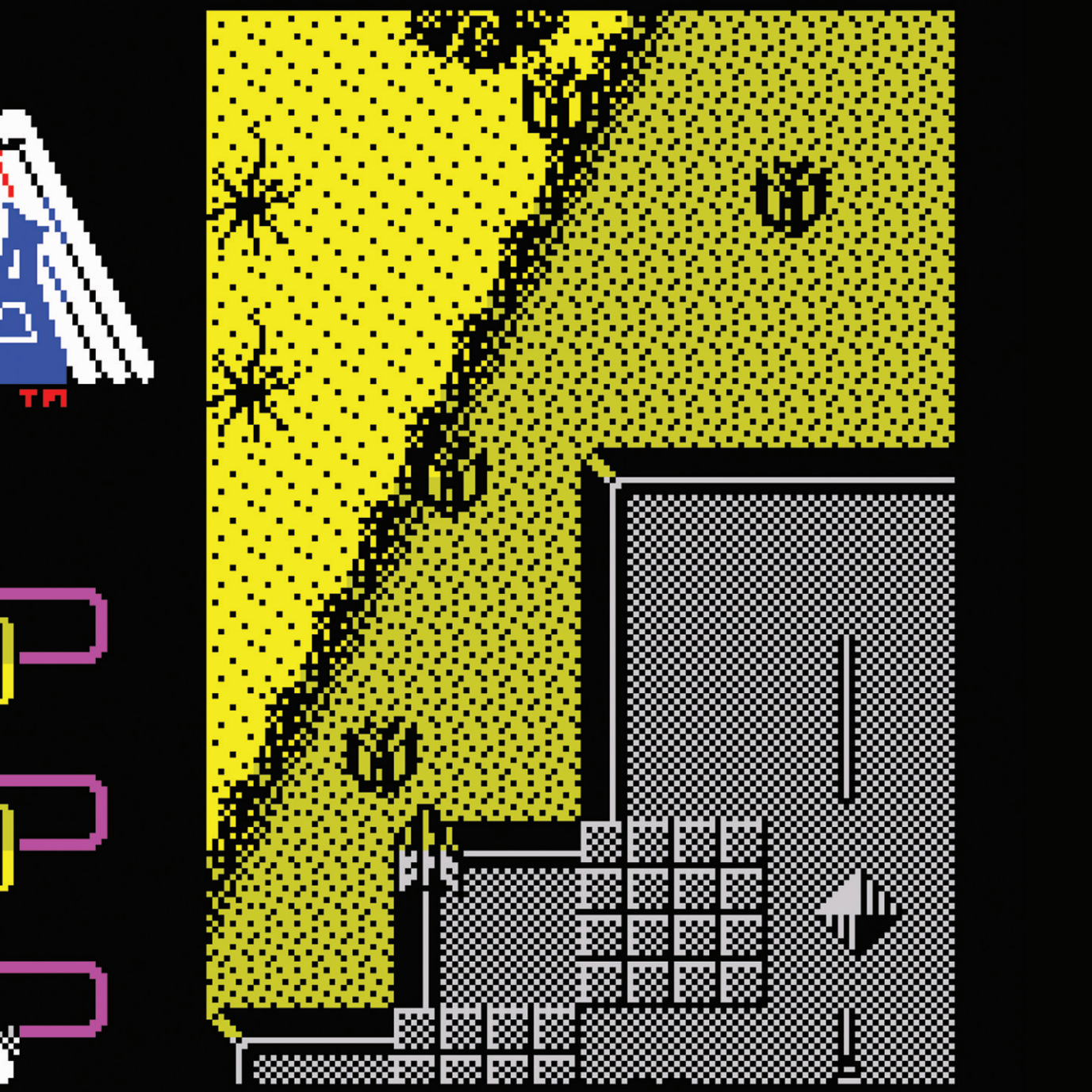


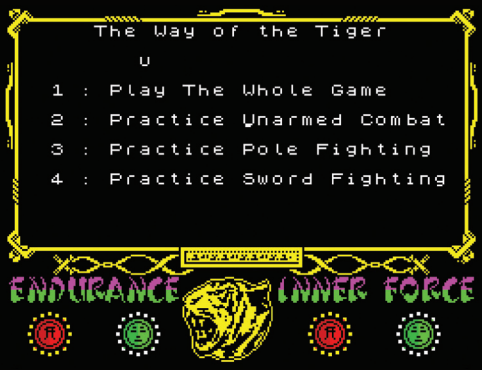






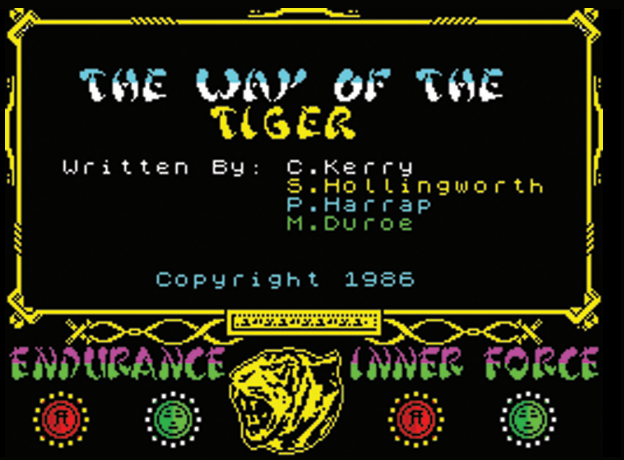
With Incentive having busied themselves creating the Freescape engine, the license to *Moon Cresta*'s sequel passed to Imagine who employed coder Jonathan Smith to replicate the arcade shooter for the Spectrum. The arcade game itself represents a significant leap up from its famous forebear. Gone are the plain black backgrounds of space and in came a varied and colourful set of backdrops and new, elaborate enemies including – yes! – dinosaurs. This gave Smith a considerable problem, as the speed of the game was considered paramount, but it had to look at least half-decent. Thus he squeezed *Terra Cresta* into approximately one half of the Spectrum's display which, while presenting some decent graphics, still presents the game a touch on the slow side and very difficult to play. Nevertheless, it's still a decent shooter, with excellent presentation and a catchy tune from none other than Martin Galway, and it scored well with reviewers.





Name	:	The Way of the Tiger
Year	:	1986
Publisher	:	Gremlin Graphics
Author	:	Chris Kerry, Shaun Hollingworth, Peter M. Harrap, Marco Duroe





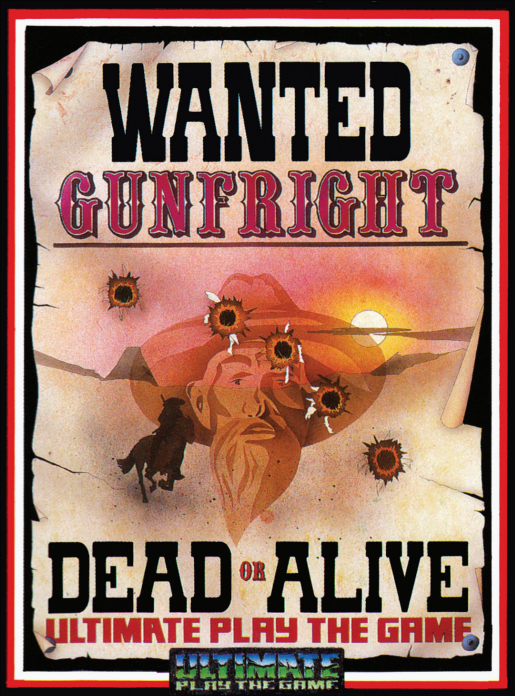


The Way of the Tiger began life not in pixels, but in print. You might well recall the abundance of choose-your-own-adventure game books back then, popularised by the likes of Fighting Fantasy, though a huge number of authors were at work in the interactive fiction realm. Gremlin Graphics took the Scrolls of Kettsuin, which told the tales of a young ninja known as Avenger, and brought him to life in the world of computerised beat-'em-ups. This was always a tricky genre for home computers, and the Spectrum in particular, but the adaptation of *The Way of the Tiger* was a triumph in every respect. It split the game into three distinct parts that each offered a significantly different fighting experience. Working through unarmed combat, stick fighting, and finally swords delivered three stunning-looking games in one, and pitted you against more than identical ninjas. *The Way of the Tiger* marked a seminal moment in the evolution of Spectrum, and home computer beat-'em-ups, and showed us that fighting games have a lot more to offer than punching and kicking.



ULTIMATE PLAY THE GAME

Name	:	Gunfright
Year	:	1986
Publisher	:	Ultimate Play The Game
Author	:	Tim Stamper, Chris Stamper



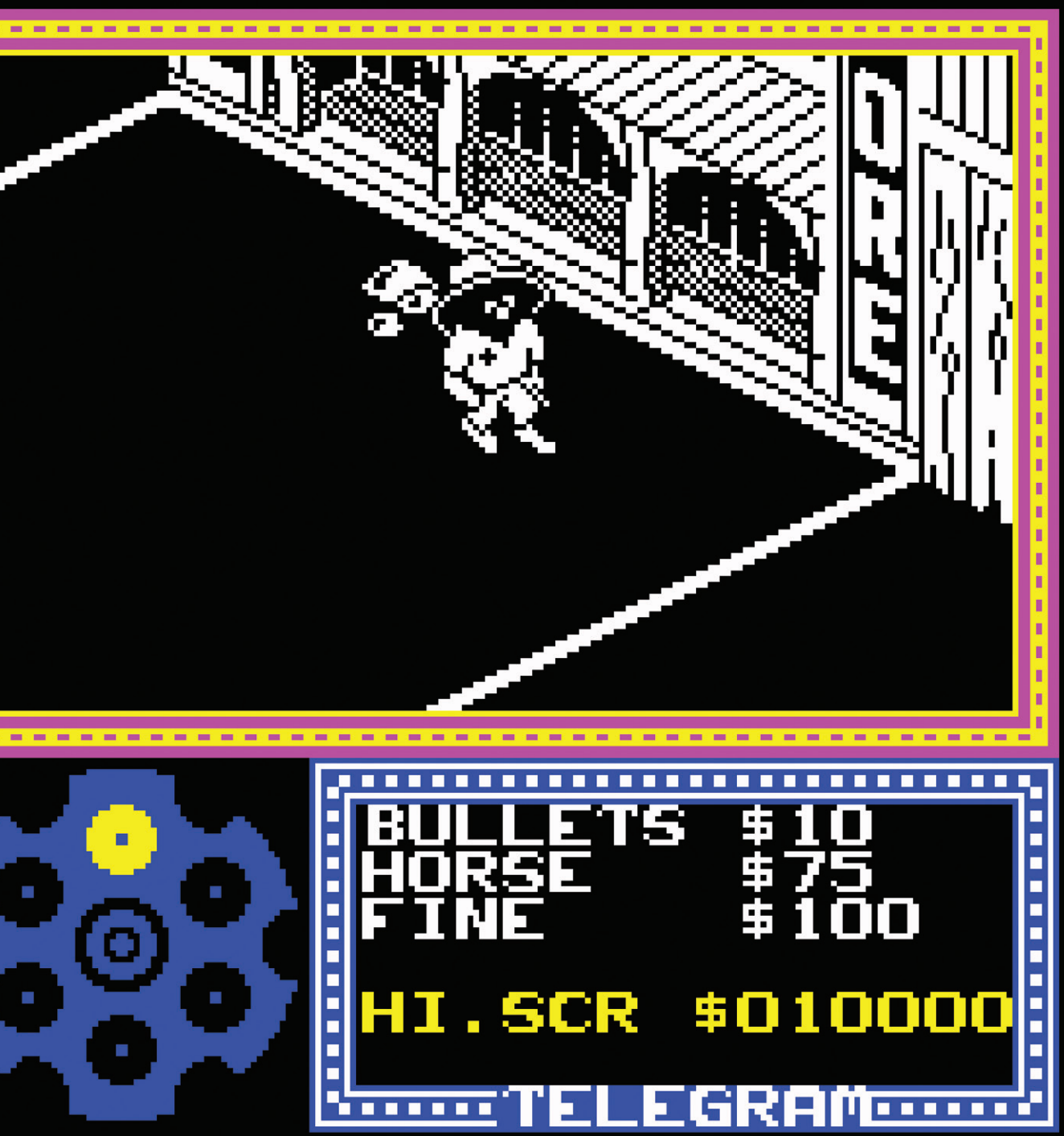
GUNFRIGHT





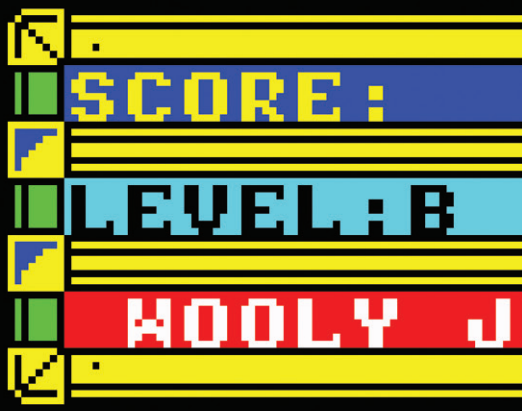


Everyone remembers Ultimate's Filmation system: who could forget the games it made possible, like *Knight Lore* and *Alien 8*? Ultimate's evolution of the system, Filmation II, was a curious thing in comparison. It added both scrolling and multiple colours to its 3D display and the result was technically amazing. However, the first title to show off the system, *Nightshade*, proved to be a dull run-around with a 'tech demo' whiff about it. With *Gunfright* Ultimate remembered to include an actual game – and a fun one at that. Playing as the local sheriff of a wild west town you have to track down outlaws and then administer brutal justice in a shoot-out scene. It lacks the colour from *Nightshade*, presumably to get the game's speed up, but overall this is a rollicking action game that recalls not just the solid playability of Ultimate's early titles but also the humour (such as one of the bandits being named 'Milkie Bar Kid' and the pantomime horse you get to ride around on).





Name	:	Trailblazer
Year	:	1986
Publisher	:	Gremlin Graphics
Author	:	Shaun Hollingworth, Peter M. Harrap, Chris Kerry, Steve Kerry, Terry Lloyd



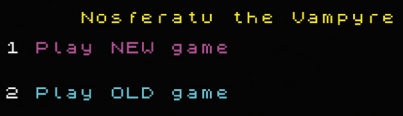




A football game for anyone who doesn't like sports sounds like a fine idea, and *Trailblazer* kept the Spectrum's soccer stoics satisfied while still giving them a ball to kick around. If anything, this was more of a racing game, though admittedly one without any corners. Not that Trailblazer needed them. Where other racing titles had bends and twists and turns, *Trailblazer* had long, random, ominous holes in the floor. It made use of a superbly rendered 3D track, which disappeared off into the distance like Star Wars credits. You took control of a bouncing footie ball and aimed to get it to the end of the fast-moving flooring as quickly as possible. There were pitfalls aplenty, which took ninja-like reflexes to jump the ball over and avoid losing it into deep, dark space, or to avoid the sections that slowed you down and took the vital spring out of your bounce. A highly unusual twist on the usual type of racing game, and one that was undeniably faster and more intense than its closest rival. Whatever that might have been, given *Trailblazer's* impressive uniqueness.



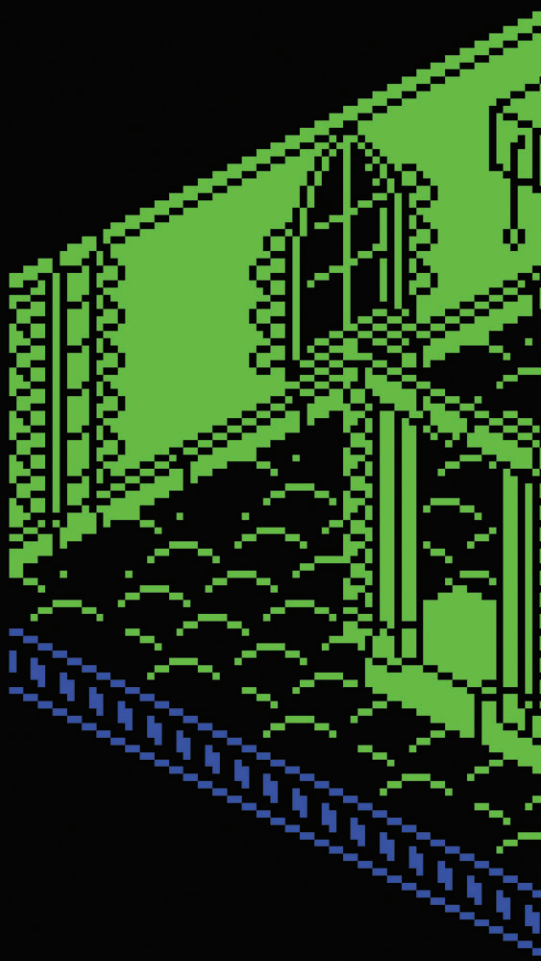




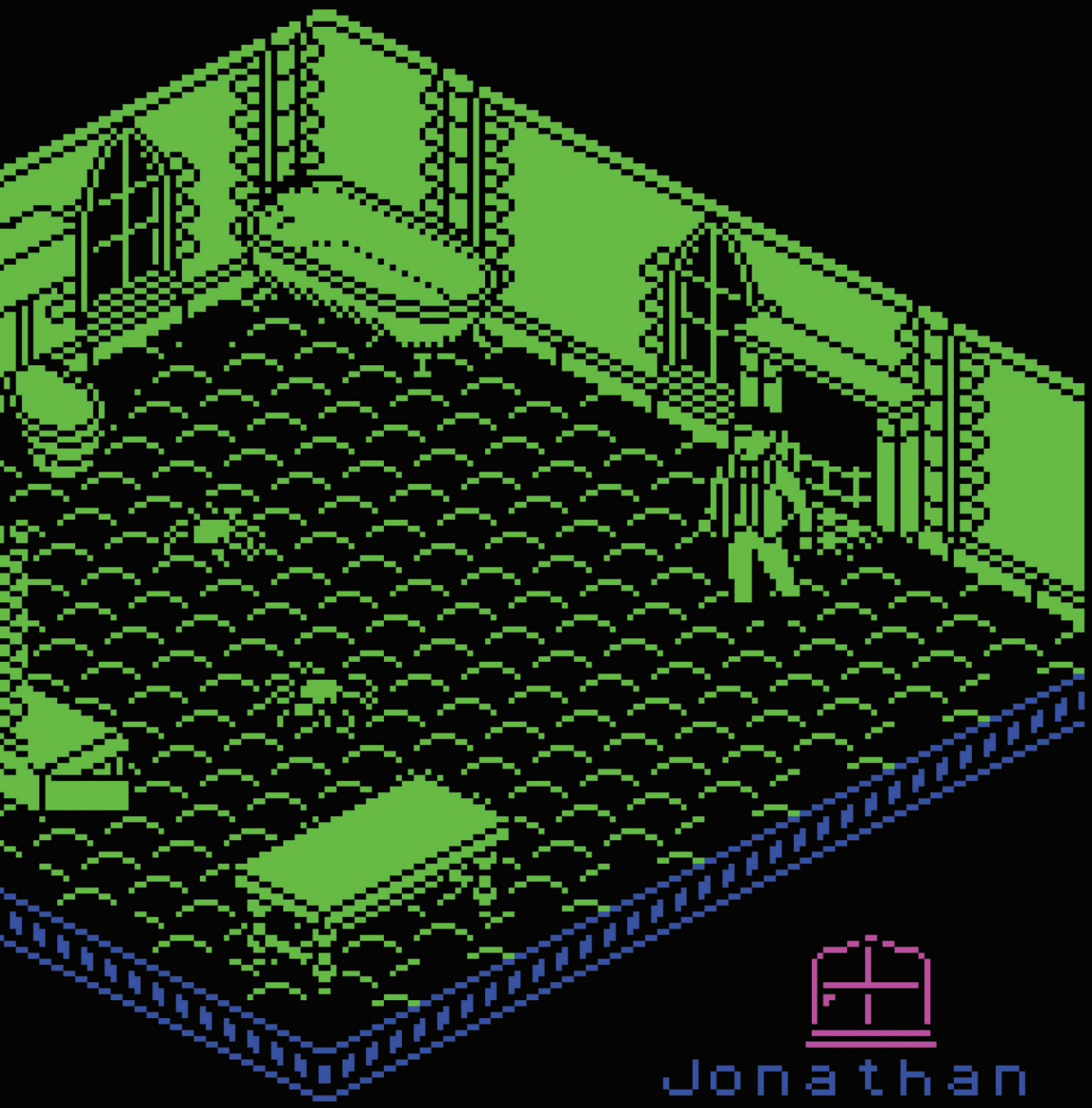
Name	:	Nosferatu the Vampyre
Year	:	1986
Publisher	:	Piranha
Author	:	Graham Stafford







The appeal of isometric games on the Spectrum was such that even two years after the appearance of progenitor *Knightlore,* a well-coded and atmospheric effort such as this could still score well with critics and gamers alike. Developed by Graham Stafford of Design Design, the game has the player in control of Jonathan Harker as he seeks to destroy the titular blood-sucker. Sent to a castle in your home town of Wismar, Harker must first locate the deeds to the castle to prevent the count from taking ownership. Once acquired, Harker must then escape, contending with plague-ridden rats, vampire bats and hallucinations created by Nosferatu itself. When free from the castle, the game shifts to the town of Wismar and the player takes control of two additional characters, Van Helsing and Harker's daughter, Lucy. The final part sees the player in charge of just Lucy as she alone can tempt the vampire to remain with her until dawn, thus inciting its own demise. Nosferatu is a superb and atmospheric game, though very difficult to complete.

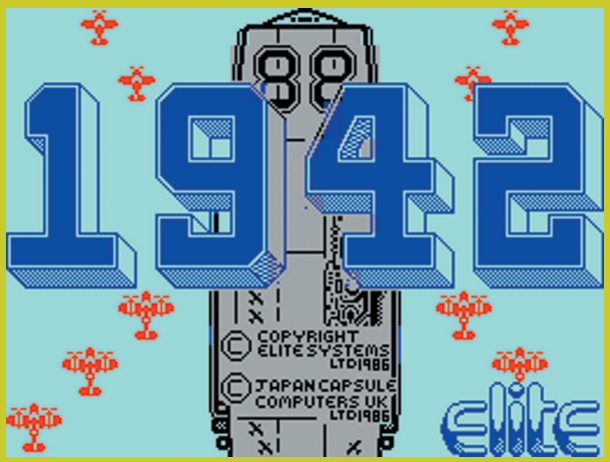


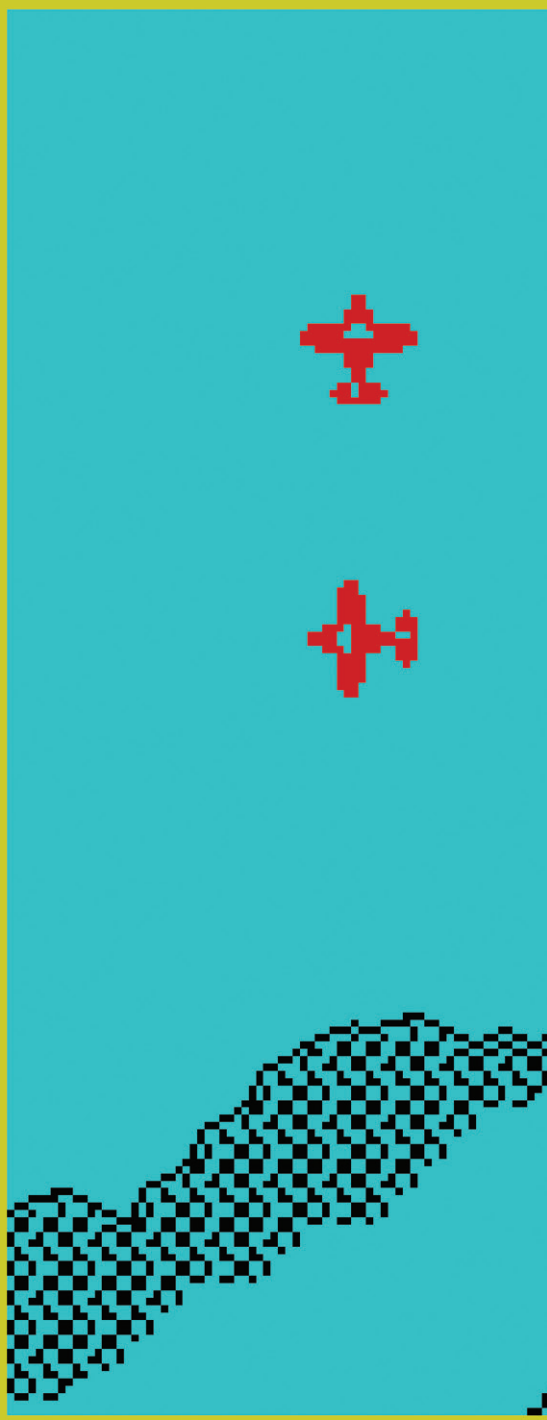




Name	:	1942
Year	:	1986
Publisher	:	Elite Systems Ltd
Author	:	Dominic Wood



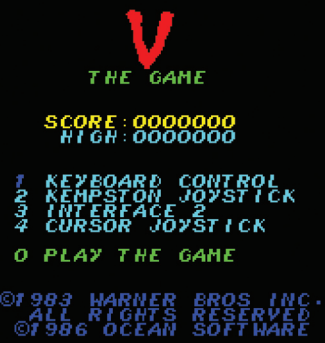




1942 was not as well received as Elite's other arcade conversions, but is still a decent game in its own right. Playing the 'Super Ace' (which is never made clear if it's the plane or pilot), the player must take on 32 levels of incessant enemy attacks, including fighter planes, bombers and jets. Shooting down a formation of five or ten red planes drops a bonus power up which varies from level to level. Most useful is an extra life or quad fire with the two extra wingmen fun, if limited, thanks to the large target it makes the player. Sound is noticeably poor, which in *1942*'s case is actually a blessing as it means you don't get the awful marching band-style whistling from the arcade original. And while the yellow background is sparse and unattractive, the game at least plays smoothly enough from what is, admittedly, a fairly run-of-the-mill arcade game.







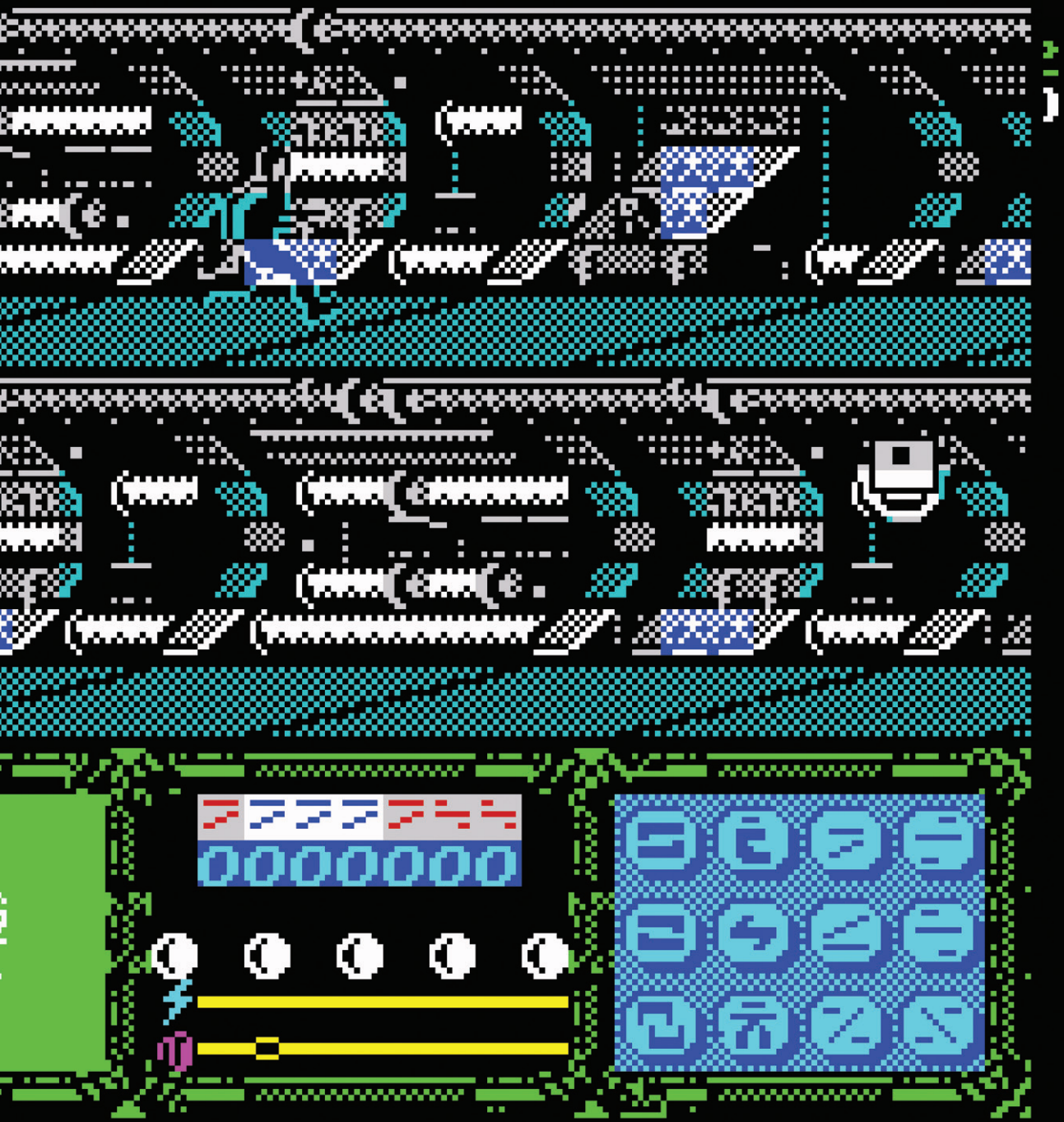
Name	:	V
Year	:	1986
Publisher	:	Ocean Software
Author	:	Gary Knight, Nick Bruty, F. David Thorpe



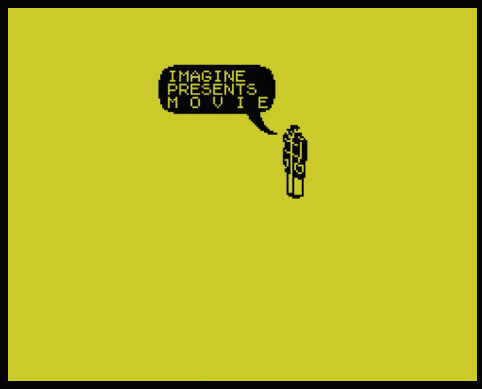




Released in June 1986, 'V The Game' is a sideways scrolling puzzle/adventure game in which you take the part of resistance leader Donovan, tasked with setting off bombs in key parts of the Alien spaceship and escaping before they go off. To do this you have to avoid the various robot guards - often by way of a neat barrel roll or two. The graphics were OK, if a bit noisy - it was sometimes difficult to make out the robots from the background. Disappointingly there are no 'Visitors' in the game. In fact, other than a character called Donovan the tie-up between the game and the TV show was pretty tenuous. There wasn't much provided in the way of instructions or guidance - at first there is a lot of running around trying to decode a base six alarm code and pictographs in order to open doors and set bomb timings - without a game save feature! All that said, 'V' was a very satisfying, slow burning game which rewarded patience and analysis in a way I had not found elsewhere - which probably says more about the kind of games I played than the games available at the time - **PAUL COYNE**

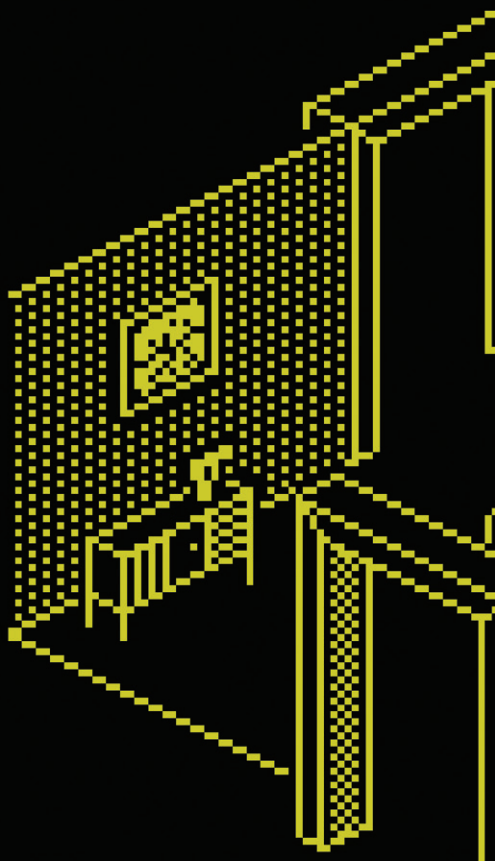






Name	:	Movie
Year	:	1986
Publisher	:	Imagine Software
Author	:	Dusko Dimitrijevic, Dragoljub Andjelkovic, F. David Thorpe





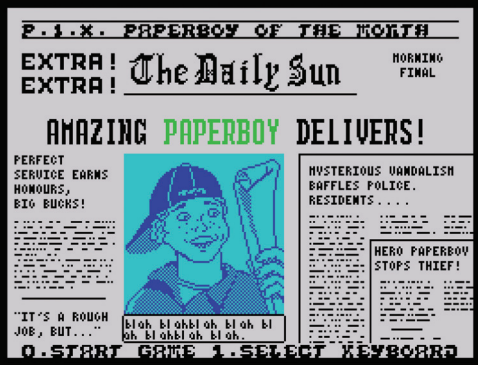




The apocryphal story to *Movie*, started within the pages of its Crash Smash review, was that Yugoslavian coder Dusko Dimitrijevic was stranded in the UK after a visit to the defunct Bug-Byte, purchasers of his first game, *Kung Fu*. With no return ticket, a fortunate trip to Ocean helped him out, although Dusko himself has subsequently dispelled this story as untrue, or at least the part about not having a return ticket. Nonetheless, with the Manchester software house keen to see what he could produce for them, Dusko realised that an isometric adventure based within a Raymond Chandler-esque world could be an interesting concept. The story to *Movie* is classic gumshoe: playing a private investigator named Marlow, it's your task to infiltrate the mob boss's HQ and retrieve an item of incriminating evidence. Marlow needs help in this and the friendly gangster's moll Tanya is his only ally. Unfortunately, Tanya has an evil twin named Vanya who will stop at nothing until Marlow is riddled with lead.



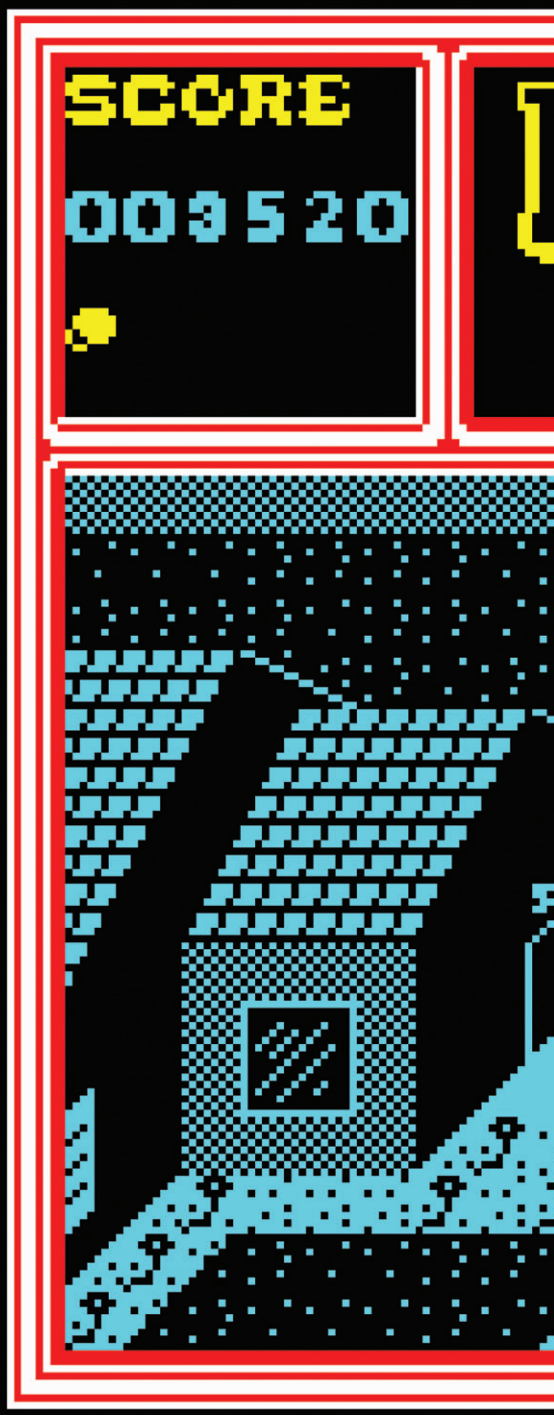
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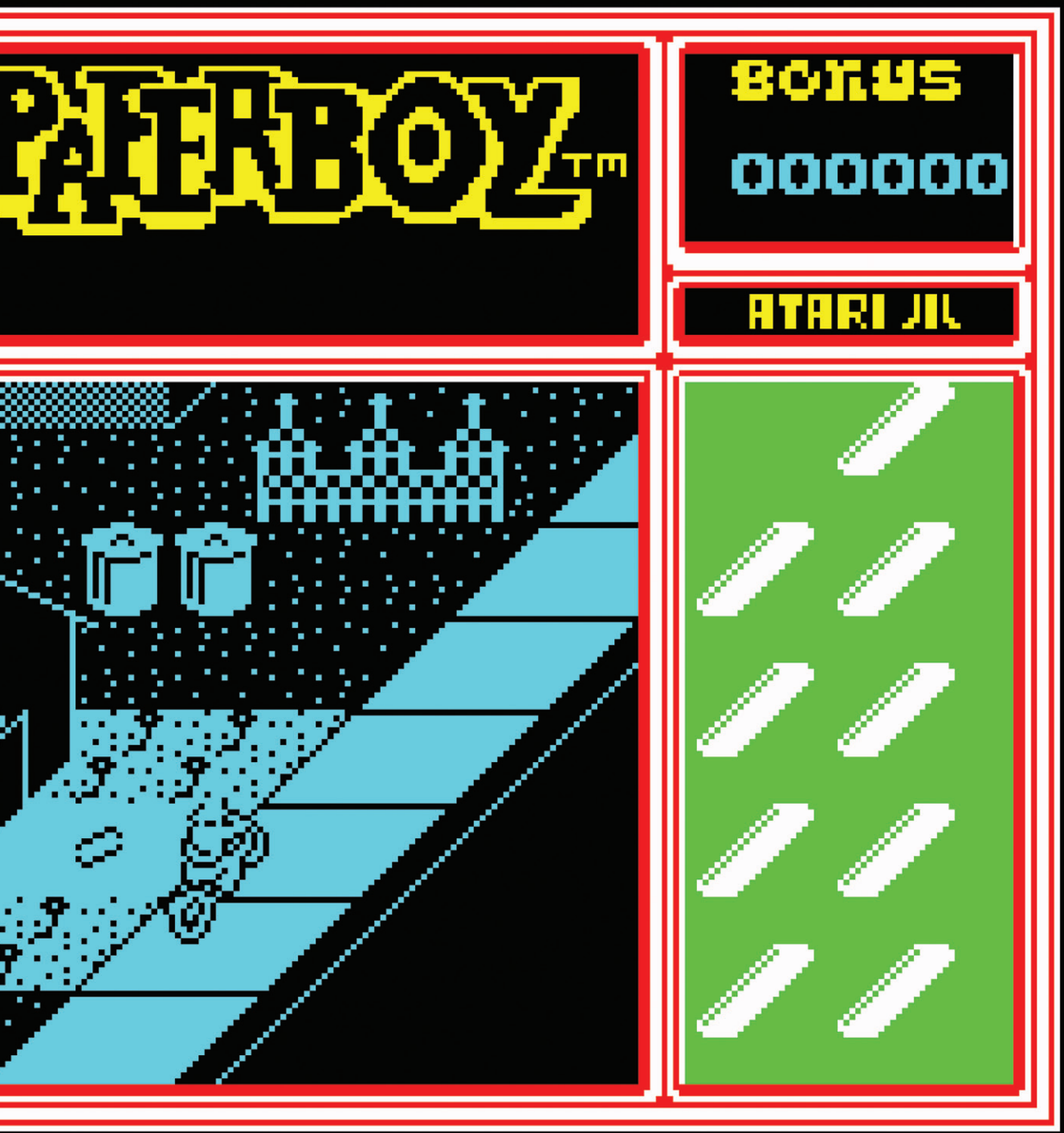
Name	:	Paperboy
Year	:	1986
Publisher	:	Elite Systems Ltd
Author	:	Steve Lamb, Tony Mack, Rory C. Green, JAF



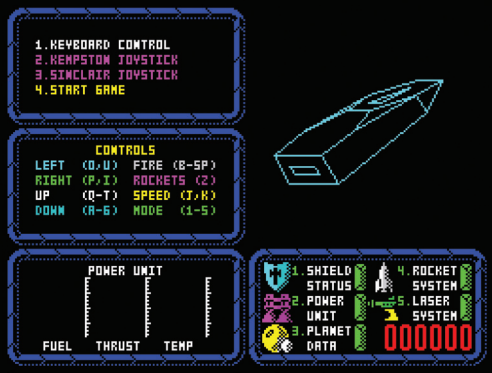




By 1986, Elite were well on their way to establishing themselves as a force to be reckoned with. *Commando*, *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*, *1942* – all were successful and decent arcade conversions thanks to its relationship with Japanese coin-op giant Capcom. *Paperboy* was another arcade game, but this time from Atari, and it was famous for not only having a set of handlebars as a controller, but also for featuring regularly on the 80s gaming quiz show, First Class. The objective of the game is to ride your trusty bike diagonally across several suburban streets, slinging newspapers in the vague direction of subscribers while breaking the windows of non-customers. Many pitfalls and traps await this brave paperboy, however; errant skateboarders, fighting neighbours, inconsiderate cars and runaway lawnmowers are all there to knock you off your trusty BMX. Make it to the end and there is a nifty assault course with ramps and gullies to negotiate for extra points.



MIKRO-GEN



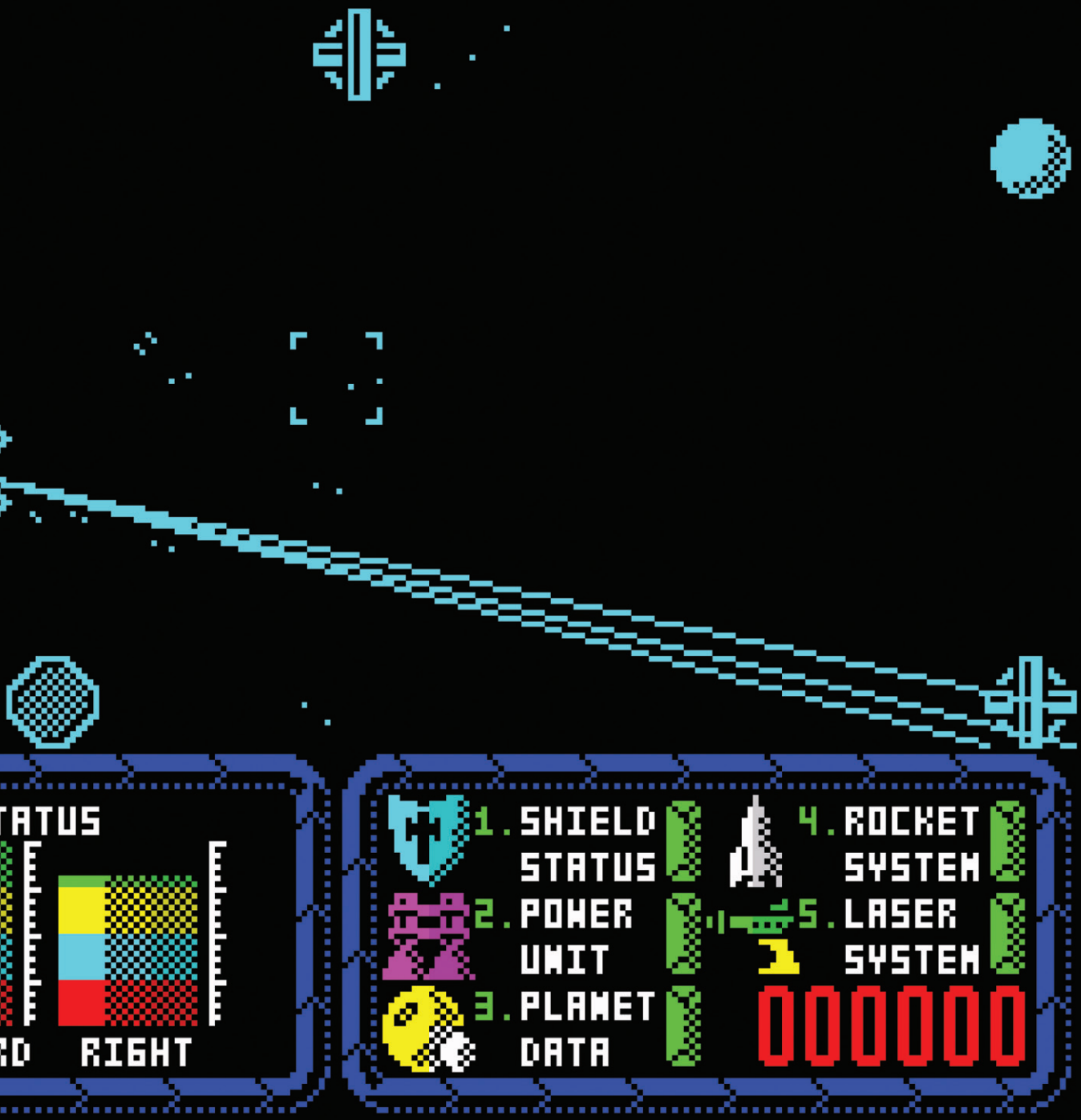
Name	:	Battle of the Planets
Year	:	1986
Publisher	:	Mikro-Gen Ltd
Author	:	Chris Hinsley

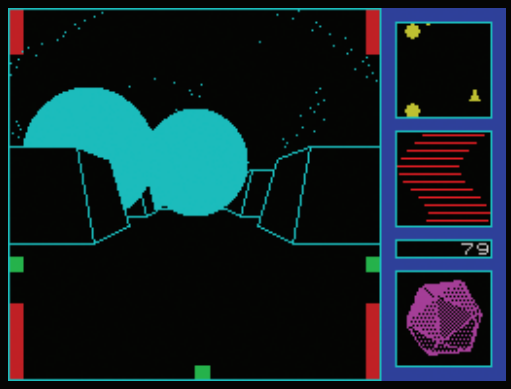




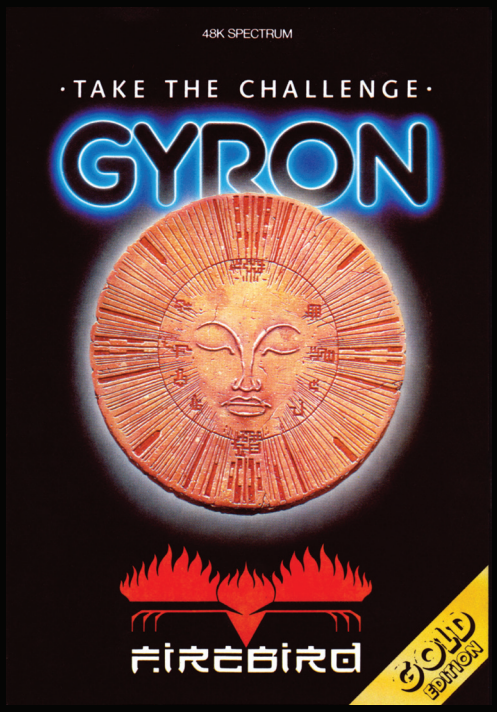


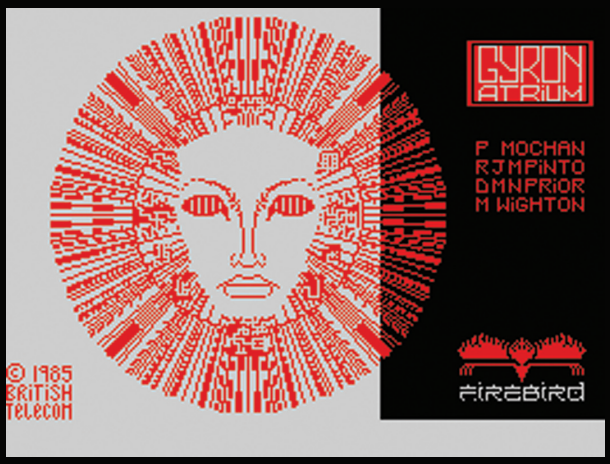
If you were of a certain age in 1986, then *Battle Of The Planets* was a weekly TV treat. Featuring five heroes known as G-Force, bedecked in phoenix-like garb, each episode would involve a battle against evil emperor Zoltar, who did insist on continually attacking the five planetary systems of our universe. Mikro-Gen secured the license and gave Chris Hinsley (the Wally week series) the task of converting the colourful cartoon to the Spectrum. Of course, what we got was a space shooter, and a pretty decent one too. G-Force's first task is to attack the enemy forces threatening a specific planet, and the Phoenix is suitably equipped with lasers and torpedoes. Once done in space, it's down to the planet surface to eliminate all the nefarious enemy landers which are slowly destroying the local population. While the game certainly lacks the depth of rival space shooters such as Elite, *Battle of the Planets* is a decent and fast-paced shooter but bears little resemblance to the cartoon.

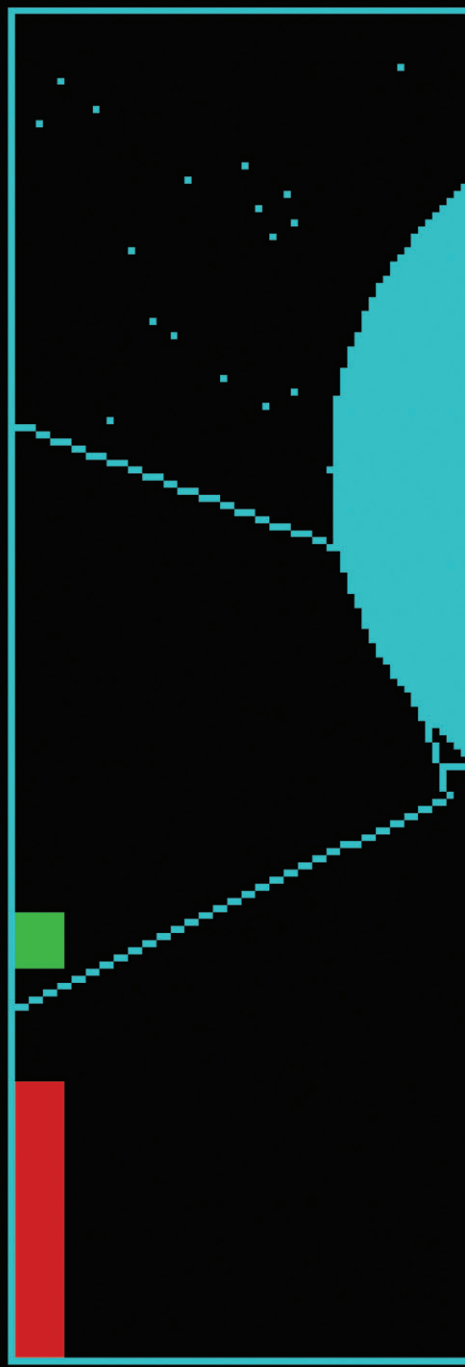




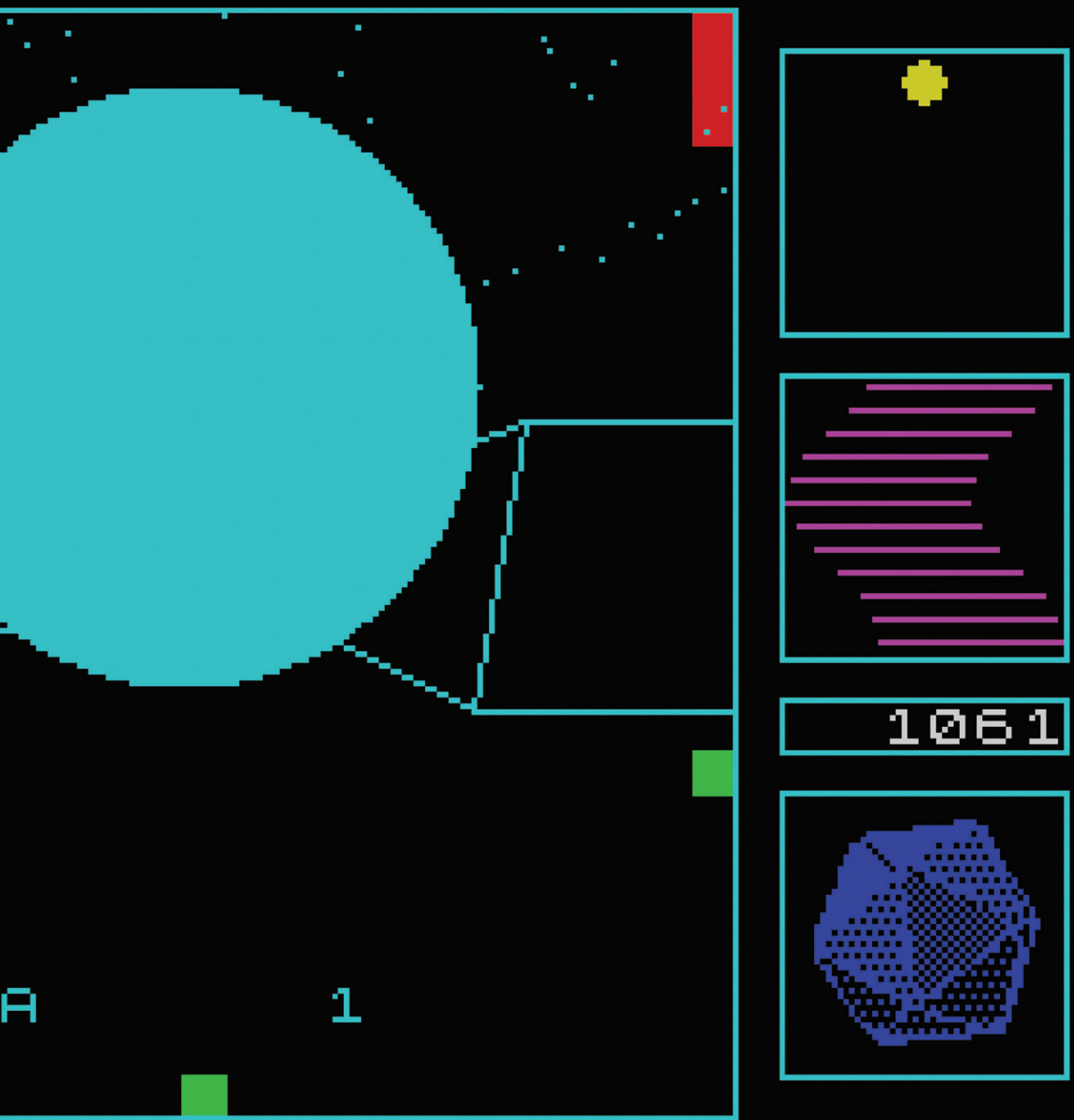
Name	:	Gyron
Year	:	1986
Publisher	:	Firebird Software
Author	:	Philip Mochan, Ricardo J.M. Pinto, Dominic M.N. Prior, Mark Wighton

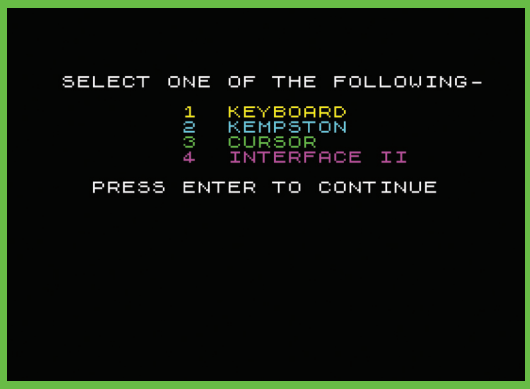




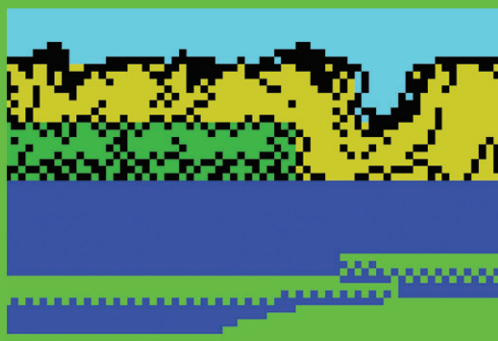


It took four programmers a year to write and the first question that enters your head when you first load up this game is “why?”. Delve a little deeper though and you will find a fiendishly clever and formidable game lurking behind the seemingly unenjoyable facade. And an amazing feat of technical prowess to boot. A game so challenging that Firebird offered a Porsche 924 to the first person to solve it before October 21st 1985. 60 people actually accomplished this and subsequently took part in a play off for the vehicular reward. The aim of this titanic game is to get your laser-toting remote control robot (Hedroid) into the heart of a computer’s defence system, which is fundamentally a maze with killer balls and laser turrets. Balls are immune to your own laser fire and kill on contact but laser turrets can be affected and even moved. This game is clearly not for everyone, but the smooth animation, intuitive controls and the fact there is an easier maze to play on side A of the cassette (Atrium) may just help quench the inevitable frustration somewhat.

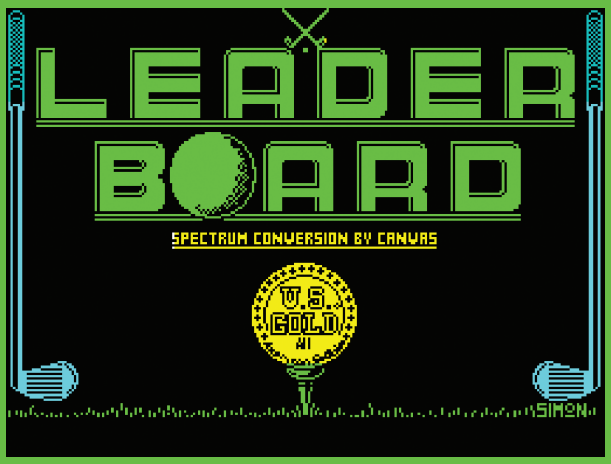


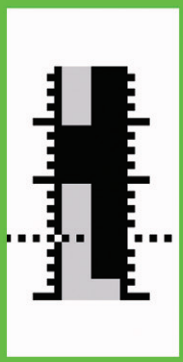


Name : Leaderboard
Year : 1986
Publisher : US Gold
Author : Roy Gibson, Chris Pink, Ian Weatherburn, Simon Butler









Leaderboard is the king of the golf simulations on the Spectrum. Converted from the Commodore 64 by US Gold and developer Canvas, graphically and sonically it lacks the instant impressive look of the original, yet doesn't want for any of its playability. After selecting how many players (up to four could play) and choosing names, it's off to the links and either an 18-hole round or a full 72-hole tournament. There are four different courses offering a variety of hazards and a comprehensive range of clubs at your disposal. Playing a shot was simple: point the cursor in the direction you want the ball to go, and press fire to play. Releasing the fire button at the top of your swing gives you maximum power; press it as the club is striking the ball to achieve a perfect straight shot. Pressing either side of contact results in a slice or hook. *Leaderboard* offers that classic balance of playability and well-judged difficulty. Fortunately a wind-less easy mode is on offer for us amateurs!



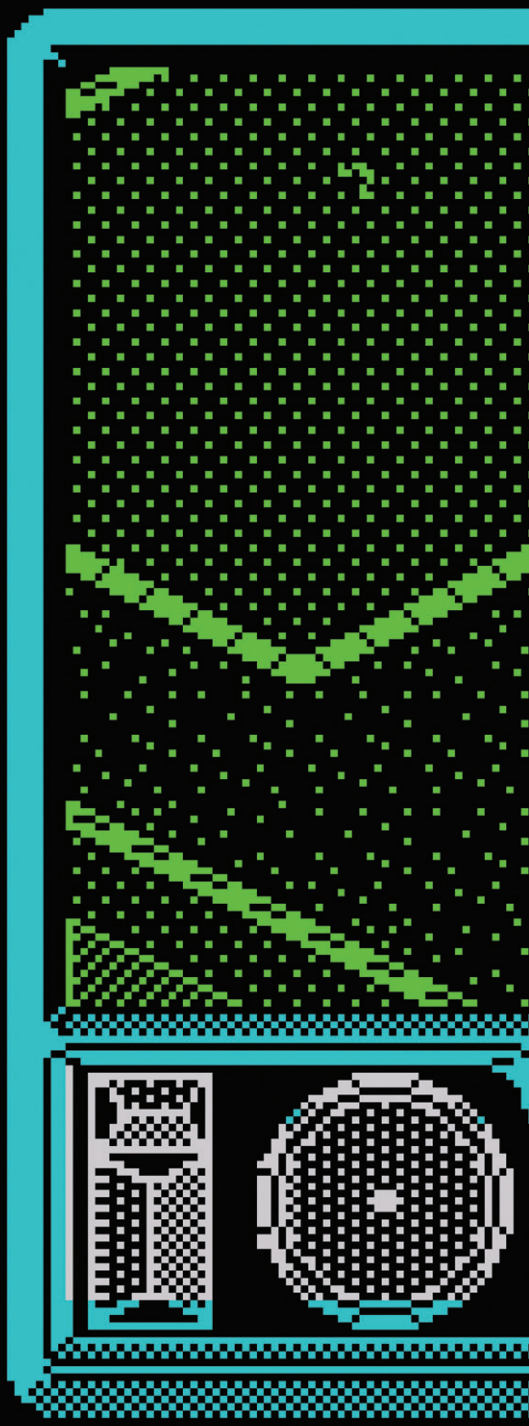




Name	:	720 Degrees
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	US Gold
Author	:	John Prince, Donald J. Campbell

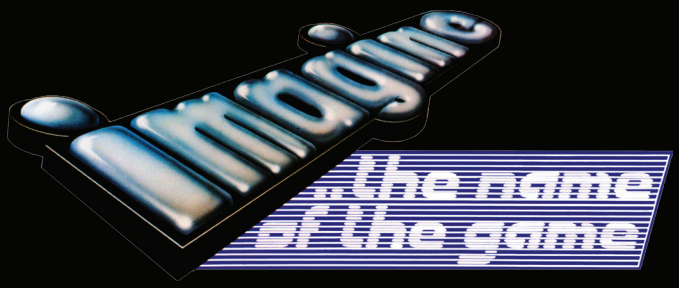






Skate or die! Based on the Atari arcade machine, this conversion by US Gold is unsurprisingly different graphically, but retains much of the original's playability. The location is the aptly-named Skate City, and your mission is to compete in several competitions, but first you must earn the cash to enter them by performing tricks on your skateboard. With its origins in the arcades, it's inevitable there's some sort of time limit; fail to gain entry into one of the competition parks quickly enough and the player is hounded by a swarm of killer bees who have obviously mistaken the skateboarder for a blooming flower bed. In addition, errant bikers seek to dislodge our hero and waste even more precious seconds. Despite its two colours, the graphics on *720 Degrees* are clear and impressive and the main character controls nicely too. The conversion retains much of the playability of the arcade game and was praised at the time for its originality, despite concerns about the game's long term addictiveness.







PLAYER	ROUND	SCORE
MIKE	6	50000
RON	5	45000
JOHN	4	40000
STEVE	3	35000
MARK	2	30000
COLIN	1	25000

Name : Arkanoid
Year : 1987
Publisher : Ocean Software
Author : Mike Lamb, Ronnie Fowles, Mark R. Jones

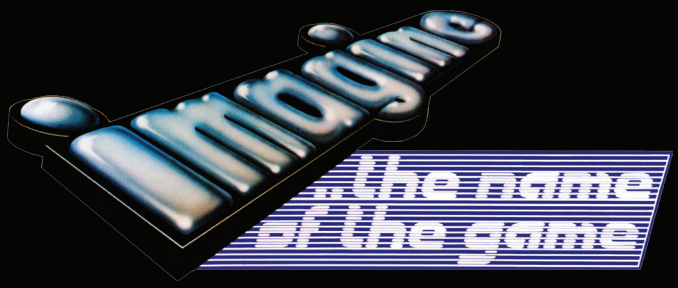






Who in their right mind wanted a *Breakout* clone? After all, the creaky old Horizons tape that came with early Spectrums contained a perfectly decent example called *Thro' the Wall*. But then *Arkanoid* was always more than a mere *Breakout* clone, featuring power-up capsules that boost the capabilities of your bat and allow you to advance through numerous brick-filled rounds, culminating in a boss battle against the temperamental space alien Doh. Taito's coin-op runs on standard Z80 hardware so the Spectrum version is unsurprisingly close to the original and includes all of its features (bar the 'spinner' rotary control system obviously, although the keyboard proves to be an adequate substitute). The backgrounds are sparse, but then this does help give the game a nice clean look – compare this to the busy, eye-watering backgrounds featured in the Spectrum sequel *Revenge of Doh*. *Arkanoid* was overshadowed by *Batty* from Elite (a game which reputedly started out as an official *Arkanoid* clone), but it remains a very fine version of a classic coin-op.







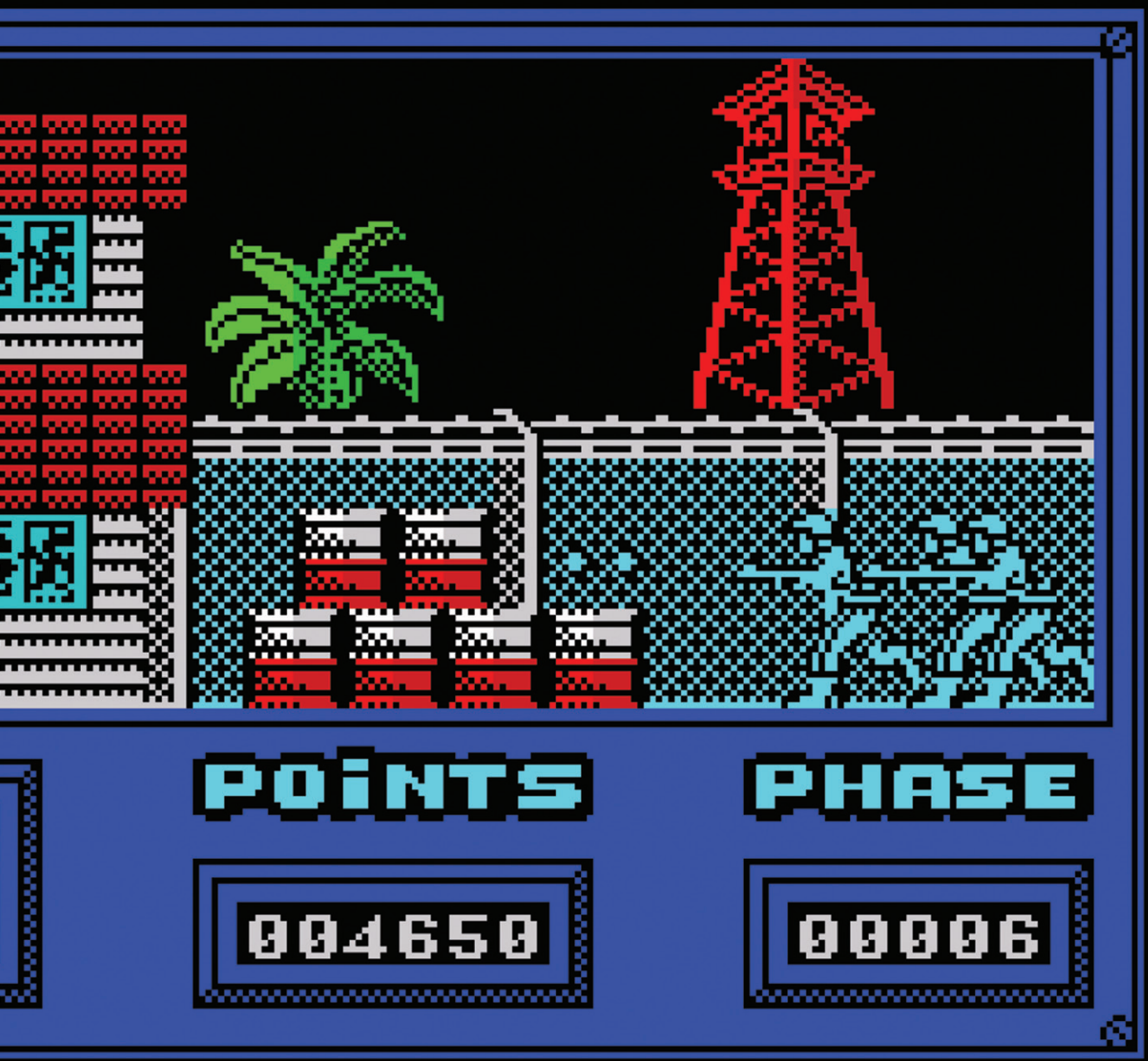
Name	:	Army Moves
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	Dinamic Software
Author	:	Victor Ruiz Tejedor, Santiago Morga, Manuel Cubedo, Javier Cubedo







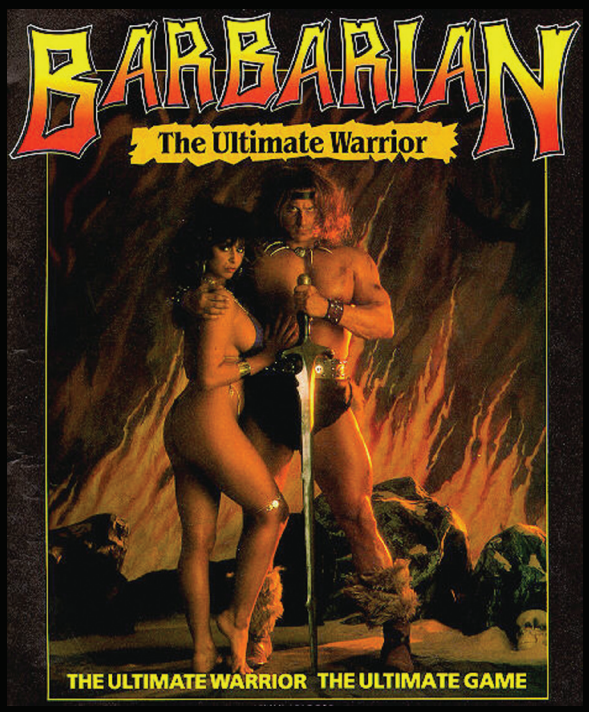
Spanish Software house Dinamic's colourful and imaginative games always looked great in magazine adverts. In reality they were often maddeningly tough, and Army Moves is no exception. Playing a spec ops soldier by the name of Derdhal, it is your mission to infiltrate a heavily-guarded enemy base and steal some vague secret documents. The game consists of seven levels which are traversed either in a jeep, by helicopter or on foot. The first level has echoes of the arcade classic *Moon Patrol* but none of that game's playability. The main issue is a rock-hard difficulty combined with some dubious collision detection, which makes for a frustrating experience right from the very start. Things get a little easier in the later levels, but the first stage is so prohibitively difficult, it's doubtful many gamers made it that far. It's a shame because like many Dinamic games, the idea was a good one, it just needed to be a touch more accessible for the casual gamer.



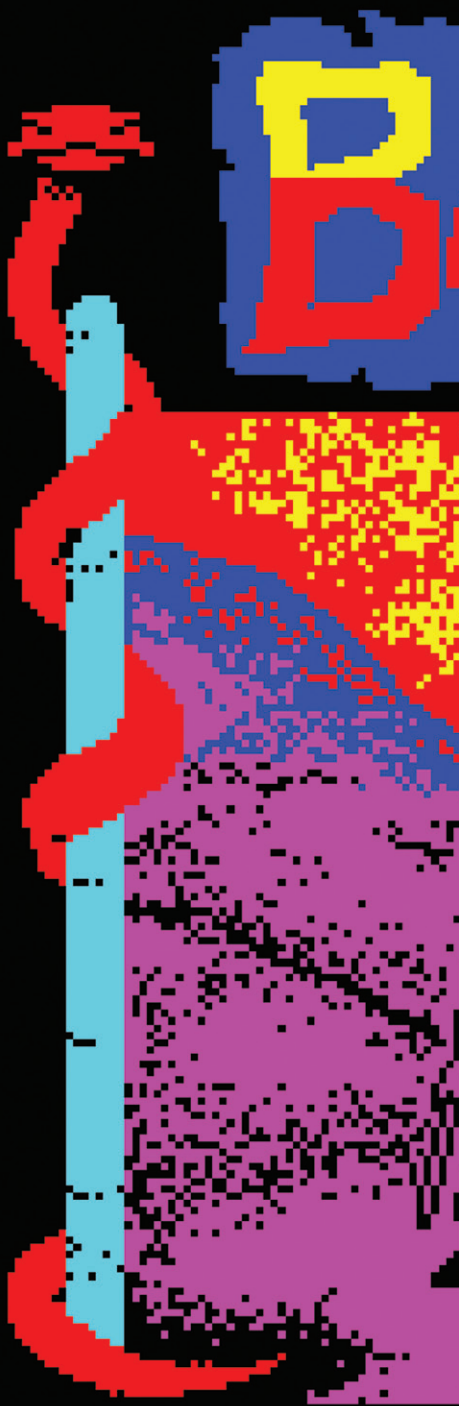




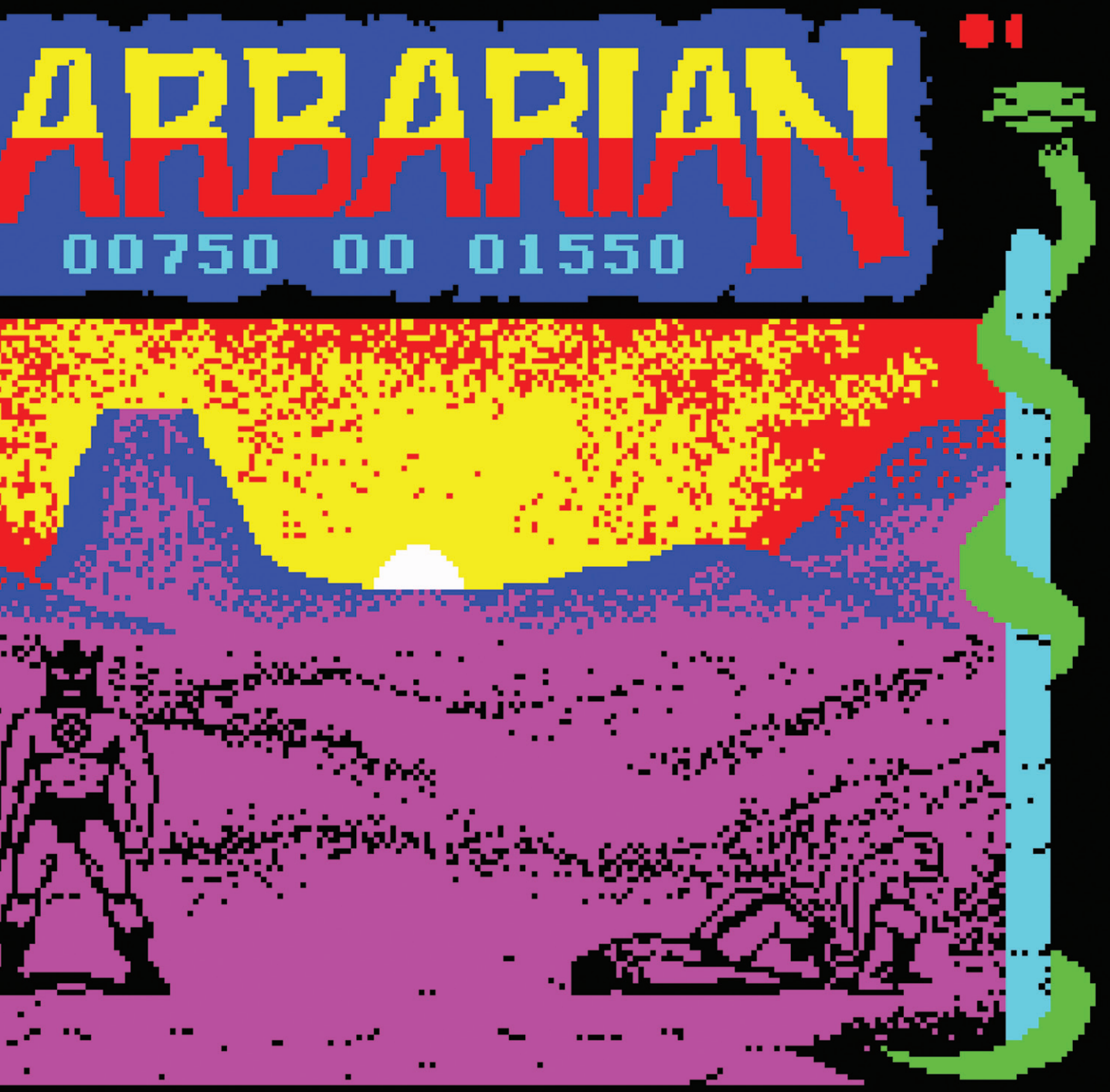
Name	:	Barbarian
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	Palace Software
Author	:	Steve Brown, Shaun Griffiths, Richard Joseph







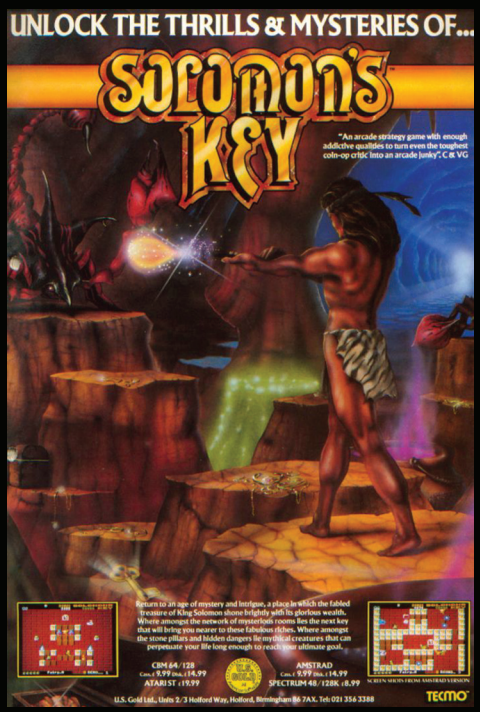
An evil sorcerer by the name of Drax (it's never made clear if he is related to Moonraker Bond villain Hugo Drax) has kidnapped the voluptuous princess Mariana. Playing as the brave ultimate warrior of the title, Drax has agreed to release the princess and call off his ransacking of the Jewelled City should the barbarian best all of his demonic guardians in a deadly arena. *Barbarian* isn't the most complex of beat-'em-ups although it has some nice touches of humour, such as a goblin carrying off the bodies of the vanquished enemies and a nice line in graphic decapitations. What made it a best-seller was undoubtedly the brilliantly-judged marketing campaign by Palace. Page Three model Maria Whittaker, dressed in, well, not a lot, was enough to get most school boys (and their dads) hot under the collar. Add in a controversial Crash magazine cover that became one of the magazine's most talked about issues, and you had the ingredients for a smash hit.



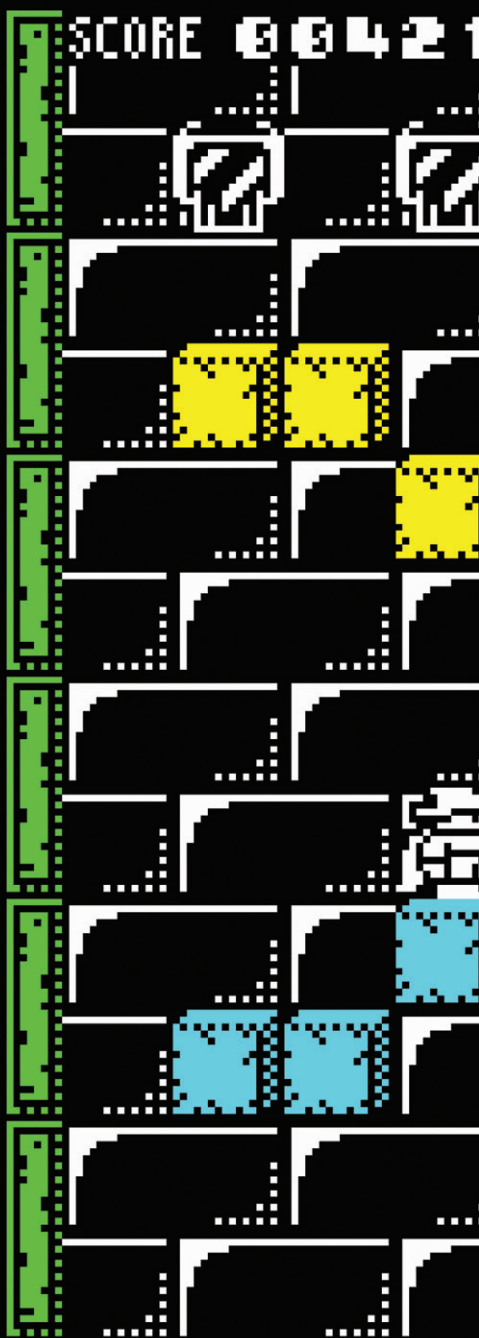




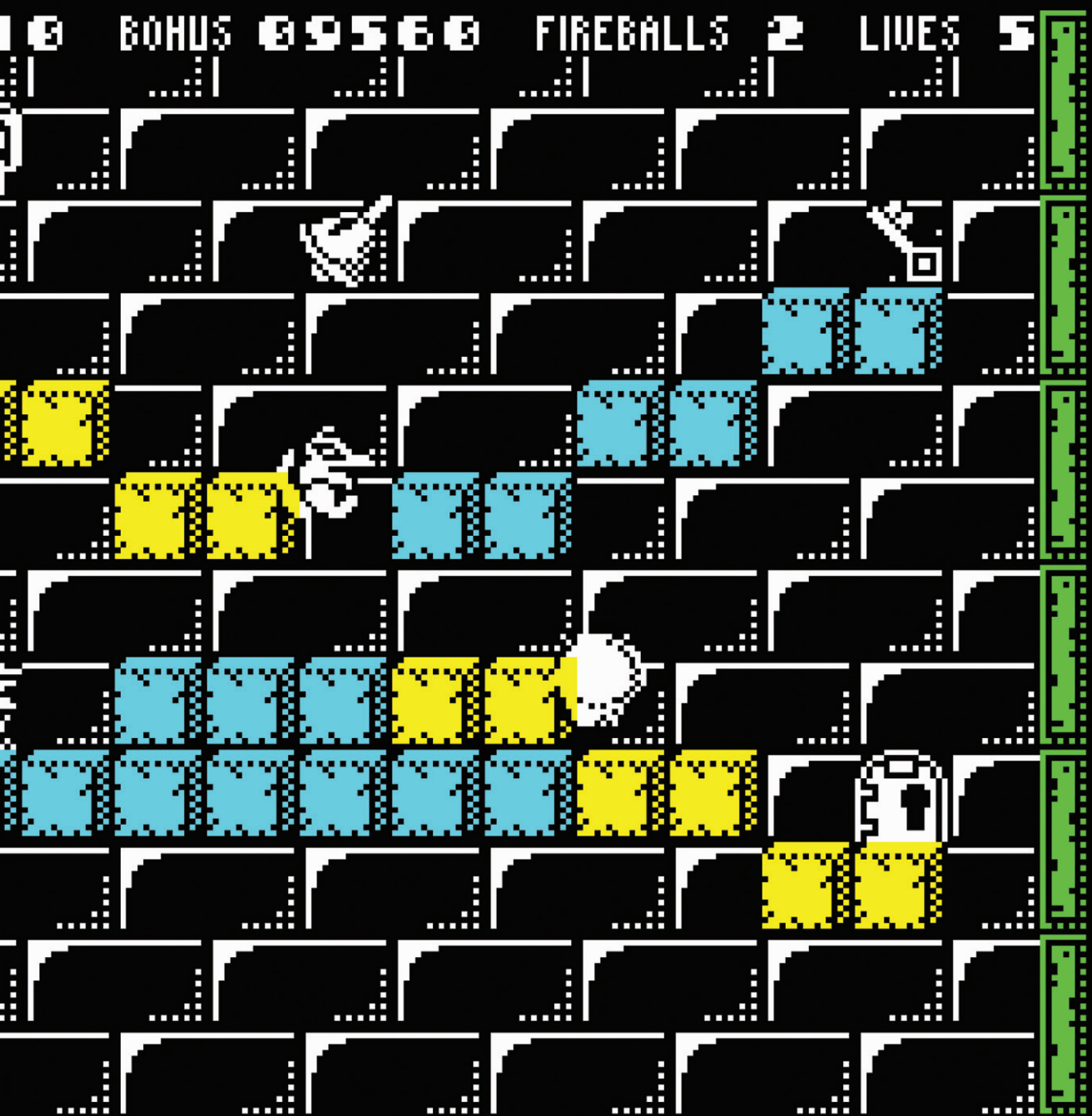
Name	:	Solomon's Key
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	U.S. Gold
Author	:	Raffaele Cecco, JPW







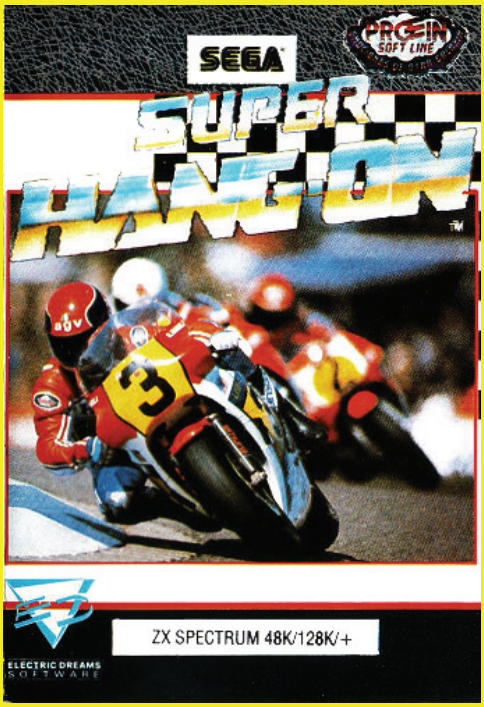
Based upon Tecmo's puzzle game of the same name, this Spectrum port by Probe Software does a great job of capturing the brilliance of the original coin munching strategic platformer. The main character in this addictive game is a sorcerer whose goal it is to escape from each room by grabbing the key and exiting through the door. Both are in plain sight but the key and door are often surrounded by blocks or on a different platform. Blocks are of 2 colours, yellow and cyan, with the cyan blocks being the only ones that can be destroyed. Destroying blocks lets you drop the baddies (demons in this instance) onto another platform and out of your way or you can choose to dispose of enemies by shooting them with your limited supply of fireballs. Being a Sorcerer sure has its perks, another one of which is the ability to create cyan blocks, which can then be used to access otherwise inaccessible areas of the room or stop baddies in their tracks. Whilst graphically uninspiring, this game has astonishing replay-ability and once hooked is hard to stop yourself having 'one last go'.



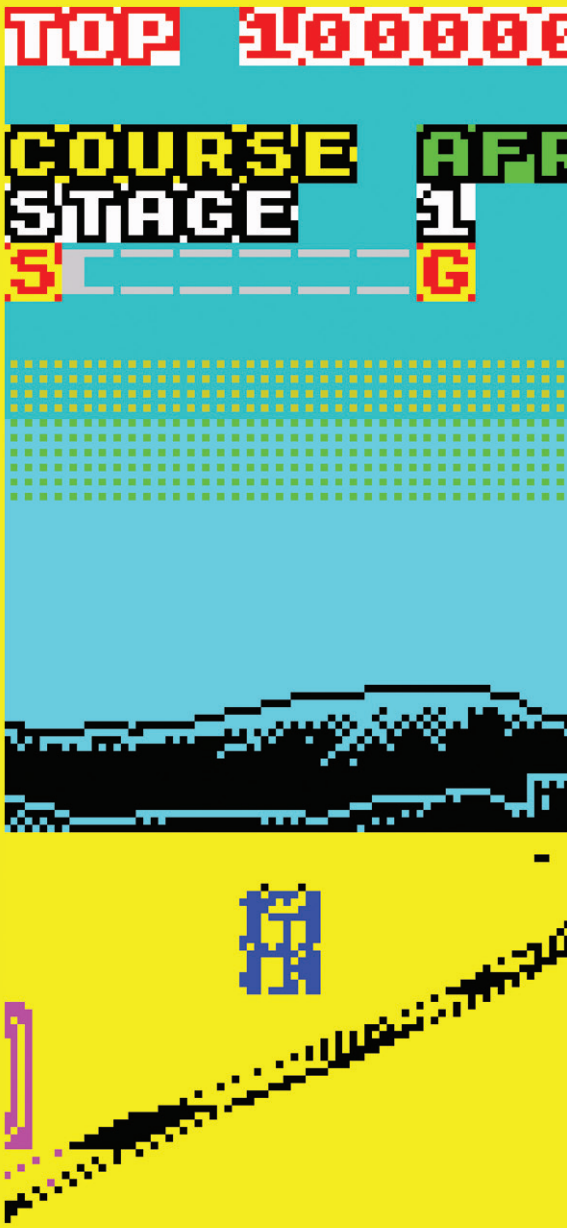
Electric Dreams
SOFTWARE



Name	:	Super Hang-On
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	Electric Dreams
Author	:	Chris Wood, ZZKJ, Mevlut Dinc





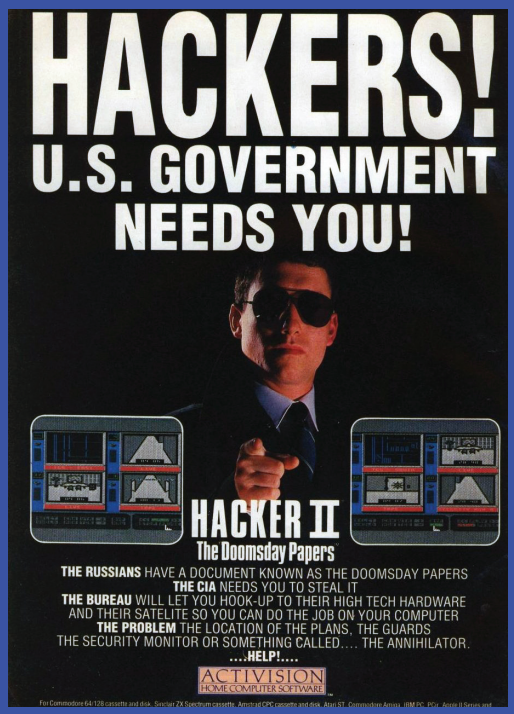


A sequel to Sega's original motorbike racer *Hang-On*, Spectrum gamers of the day were dubious as to whether or not they really needed another racing game, whether it was on a superbike or not. *Super Hang-On* was up against the likes of the excellent *Enduro Racer*, which made it to the shelves first, so this home conversion was up against the odds in every respect. Yet it surprised reviewers with the stunning quality and accuracy of its adaptation. *Super Hang-On* was colourful, fast and beautifully balanced. The game was perfectly balanced, so every race won was a genuine victory, and the skills you learned paid off as you sped through Asia, Africa, America and Europe. It even built on the arcade original by offering control enhancements at the options screen so you could fine tune your bike (and joystick) and make the checkpoints with valuable seconds to spare. *Super Hang-On's* basic upgrade options became the ancestor of vehicle modifications we take for granted in today's racing games, and it all began right here in the flawless home computer conversions.



ACTIVISION
HOME COMPUTER SOFTWARE

Name	:	Hacker II: The Doomsday Papers
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	Activision
Author	:	Steve Cartwright







In days gone by hackers were cool. We've all seen War Games right? Well, Hacker II is nothing like War Games. In this game you have been recruited by the US Government on the back of what you supposedly achieved during the previous game. Using the now familiar (you did play Hacker didn't you?) MRUs or Mobile Remote Units, you must infiltrate a top secret Soviet base and retrieve details of the reds dastardly plans known as 'The Doomsday Papers' before they get chance to put them into action. You will be able to manipulate their 4 screen, 38 channel surveillance system by adding your own video recordings in order to assist you in avoiding their security guards. You also need to map out the complex and its inhabitants using the same four monitors. This is imperative as they have a robot of their own known as the annihilator and once that starts chasing you down, you had better have a plan of escape. This game succeeds in being atmospheric and at times the action is riveting but it has a high difficulty level and consequently you will need an awful lot of perseverance.

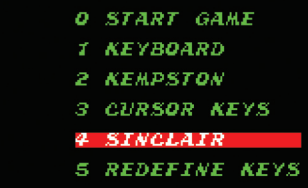
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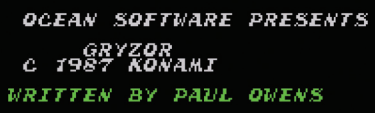
T'S NEW THIS WEEK XXXXXXX

WEEK'S TOP 10
US OF BESTSELLING SOFTWARE
VIEW WITH BRAD FREGGER...
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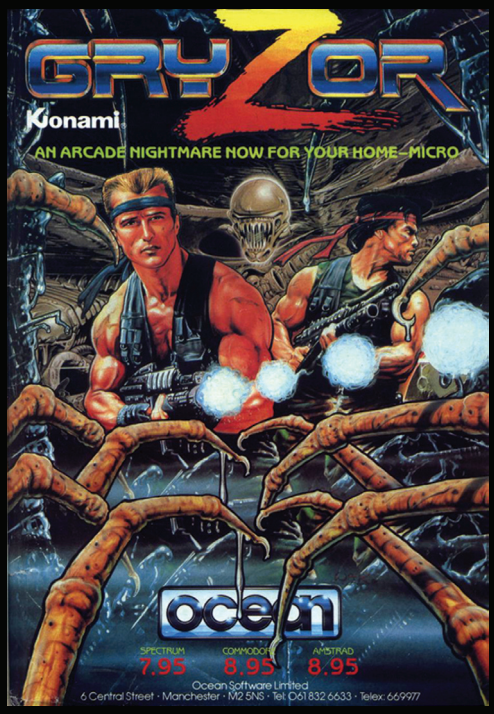


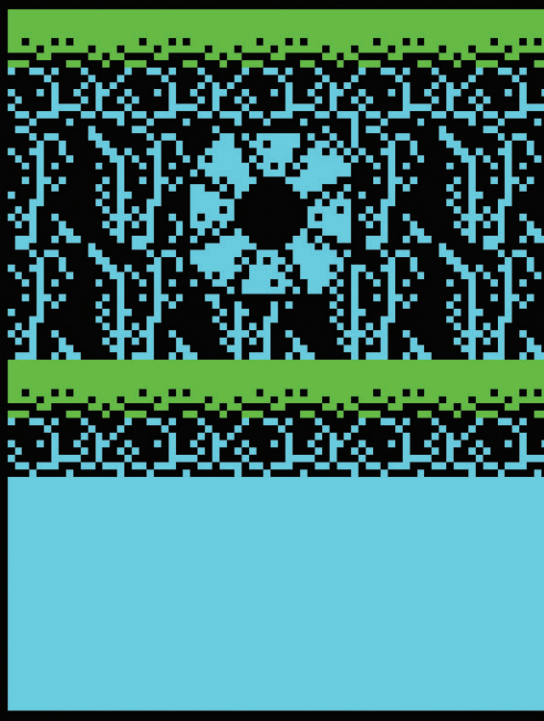




Name	:	Gryzor
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	Ocean Software
Author	:	Paul Owens, Mark R. Jones, David Whittaker









Arcade games always proved a challenge for developers to convert to the Spectrum and *Gryzor* is no exception thanks to its fast, intense gameplay and multiple viewpoints. The Spectrum conversion was handled by Ocean and coded by Paul Owens with graphics by Mark Jones, and instead of opting for monochrome graphics, the team used a colourful display with the various sprites merging in with the colour of the background. It results in a game that looks good in screenshots, but is a little tricky to play. The first level is akin to *Green Beret* as your soldier makes his way across a deceptively bucolic landscape to an alien base. Blast off the door and it's into a series of tunnels in a 3D perspective before climbing up a gorge to a final battle with the boss alien. *Gryzor* isn't a bad game, and is certainly much better in 128K mode thanks to some catchy music. Technically it has some issues, but is varied and playable enough to hold interest.









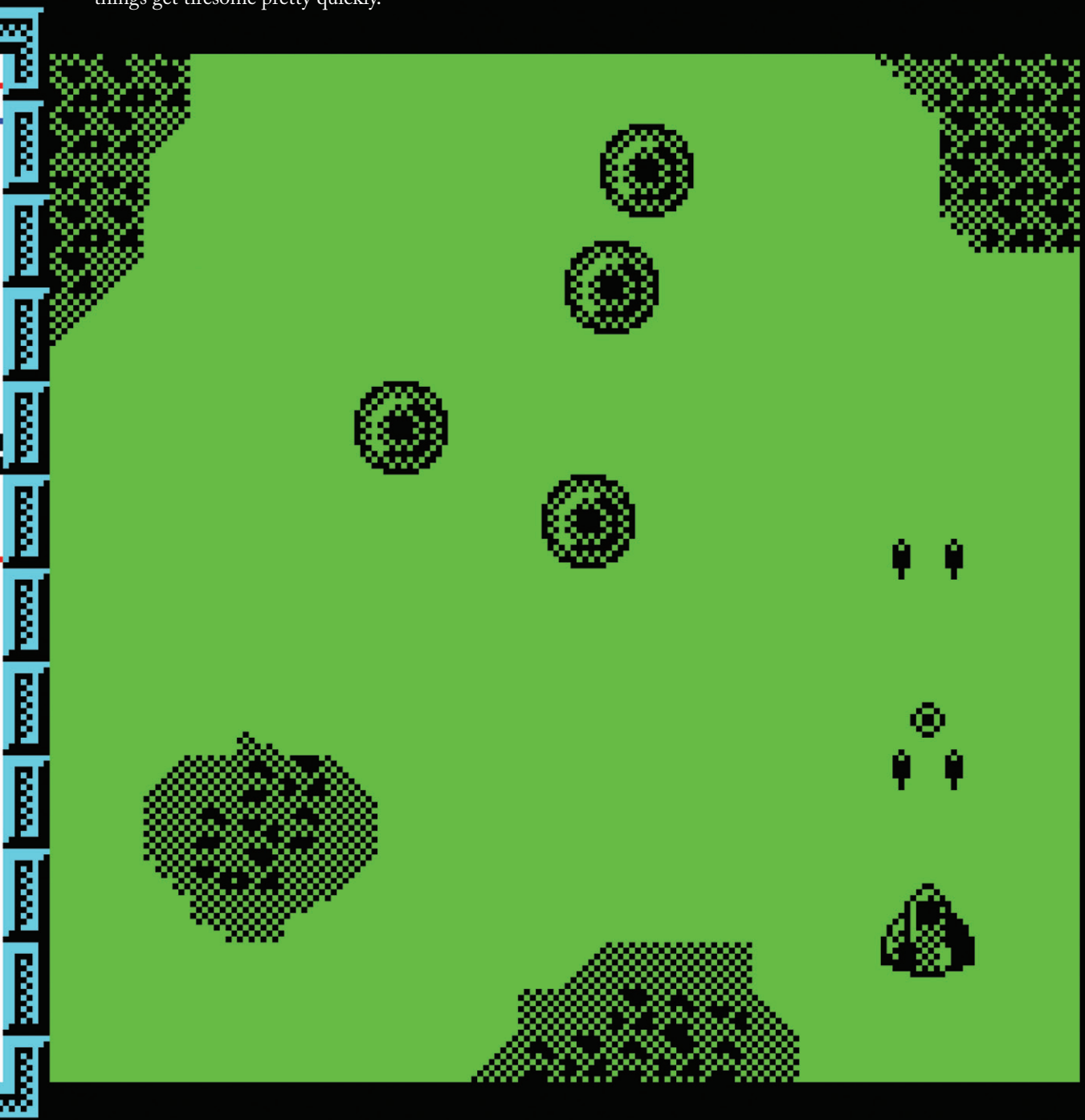
NAME : Xevious
YEAR : 1987
COMPANY : US Gold
AUTHOR : Nick Bruty







Released some five whole years after the influential arcade original was released in Japan, this Spectrum conversion of *Xevious* was undeniably slow out of the blocks. Unfortunately the fear of colour clash and the ensuing penchant for monochromatic games had taken hold by 1987 and not only was it looking a bit dated but it was also looking a bit too erm... well, green. It plays pretty much the same as the original thankfully with smooth scrolling of the play area and some nicely animated sprites gracing the screen. Two players can take turns in dealing death to the poor Xevious who have re-inhabited Earth after being away since the last ice-age (has no-one heard of sharing?). Steer your Solvalou (the name of your ship) over enemy territory *1942* style, blasting flying enemies with your guns and dropping bombs on ground targets using the handy target circle as a guide. Great for a quick blast and the tunes and sound are effective whilst not outstanding. Ultimately though, it's all much of a muchness and things get tiresome pretty quickly.



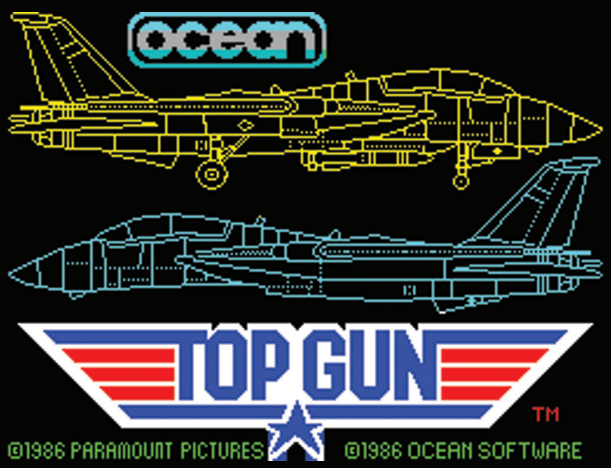


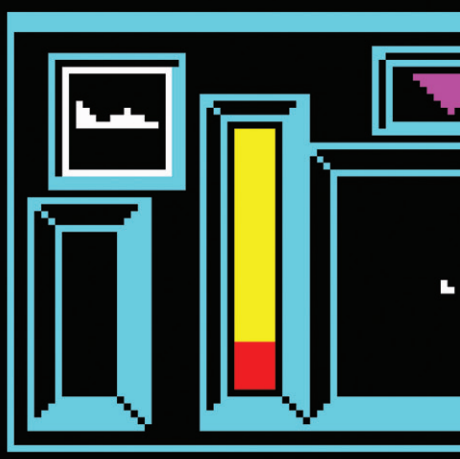


Name	:	Top Gun
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	Ocean Software
Author	:	Mike Lamb, Ronnie Fowles

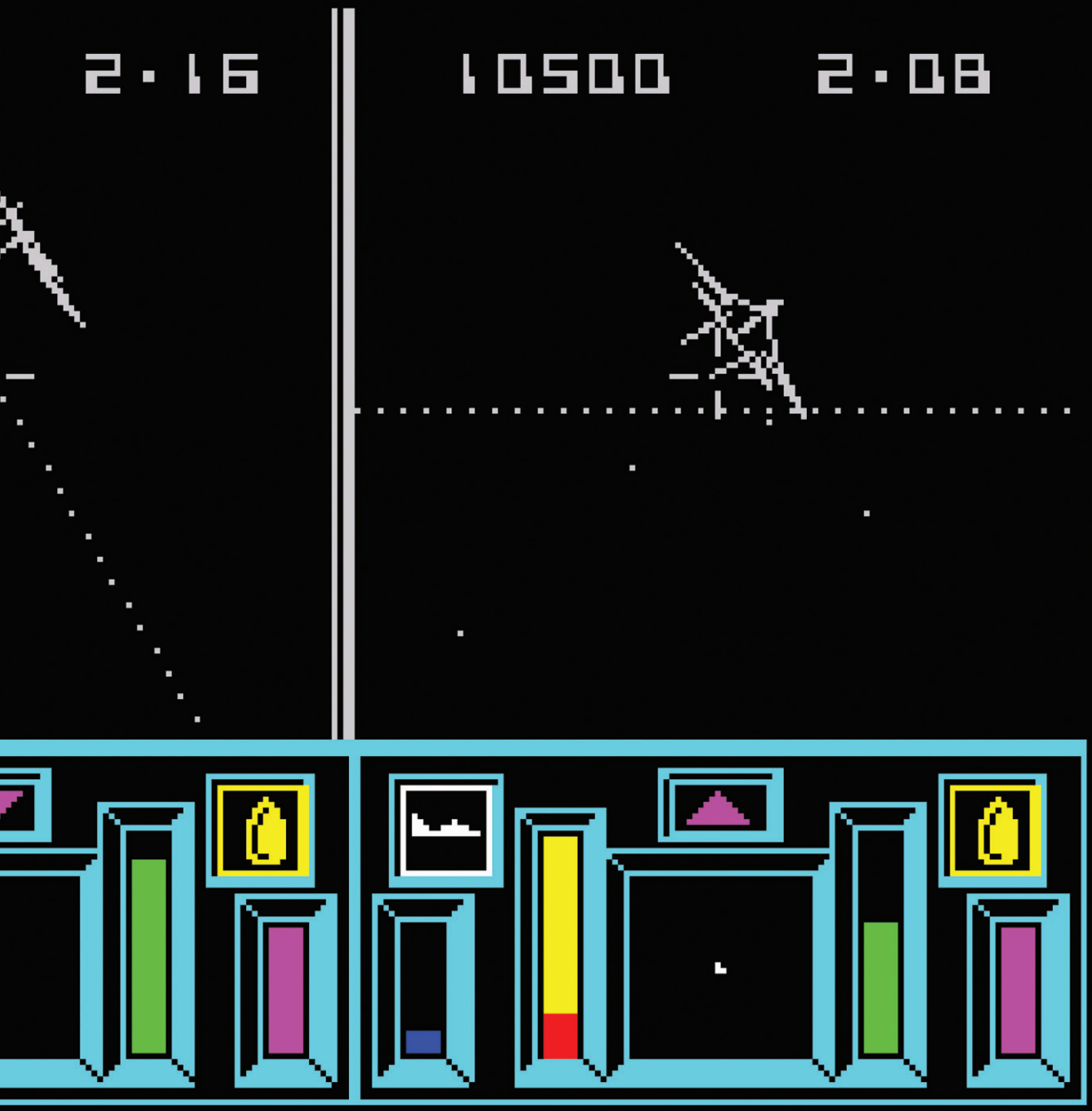








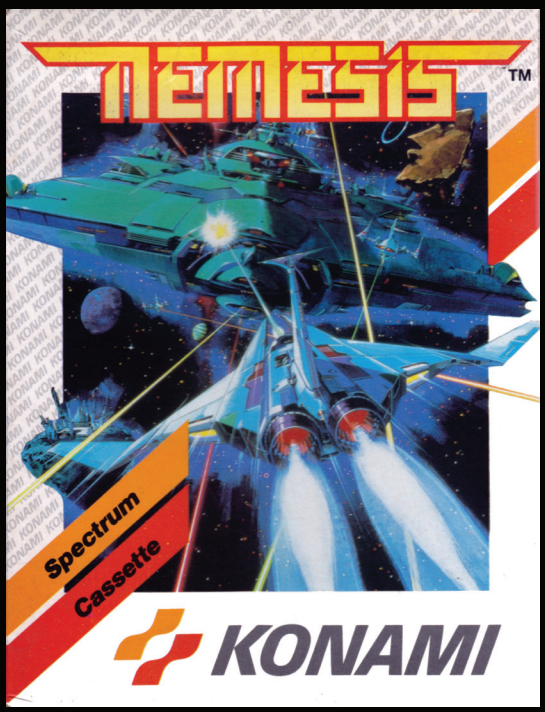
Despite its success during the latter half of 1986 with fellow movie license *Cobra* and the isometric extravaganza *The Great Escape*, many gamers were still cautious when it came to Ocean's output, thanks to releases such as *Knight Rider*, *Street Hawk* and *Transformers*. Having missed that crucial Christmas market, expectations were not high for *Top Gun*; so when it did turn out to be a pretty decent, if predictable, game, many were pleasantly surprised. *Top Gun's* wisest move was to implement a head-to-head mode where players can take on a friend, at a time when such modes were still fairly rare. The action is split into two screens showing the view from each cockpit. The enemy planes are shown in impressively-swift 3D vector graphics and the game dispenses with any pretence of being a serious flight simulation. Much like the movie upon which it is based, *Top Gun* is all gloss and excitement: the objective is simply to shoot down the enemy fighters, something that soon becomes monotonous in its single-player mode. A fine two-player game.



KONAMI



Name	:	Nemesis
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	Konami
Author	:	Cyclone, Stuart J. Ruecroft







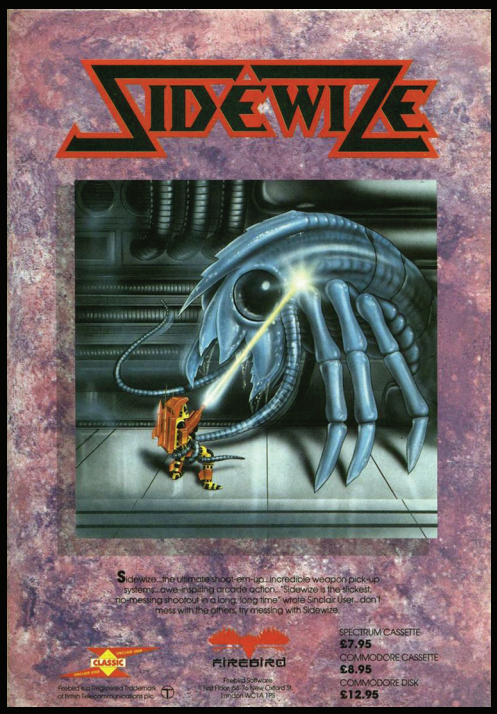
Terrible decisions in history part 3,423: Konami decides to develop its own arcade games onto the 8-bit home computers. It probably seemed like a good idea at the time; surely the Japanese giant knew its own games best? Unfortunately, localised versions such as the Spectrum were handled by coders who didn't live up to the high standards previously set by Imagine. *Nemesis* (or *Gradius* as it is known outside Europe) is famous chiefly for introducing the concept of weapon add-ons. When enemies inside the horizontally-scrolling territory were shot, they often drop a glowing pod. Picking it up gives the player the option of upgrading their spaceship, such as adding a powerful laser or missile. The arcade game is extremely popular and the Spectrum version attracted much controversy when an early screenshot in Sinclair User proved to be somewhat less than accurate. When the game was finally released, it was met with indifference. Stodgy controls, blank, characterless levels and a turgid pace mean it is a shadow of its illustrious parent. A real shame.







Name	:	Sidewize
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	Firebird Software
Author	:	Steve Wetherill, Colin Grunes







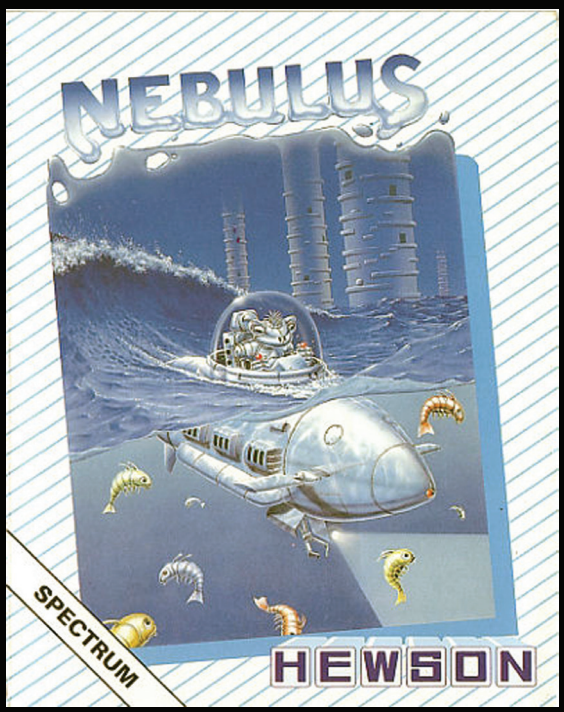


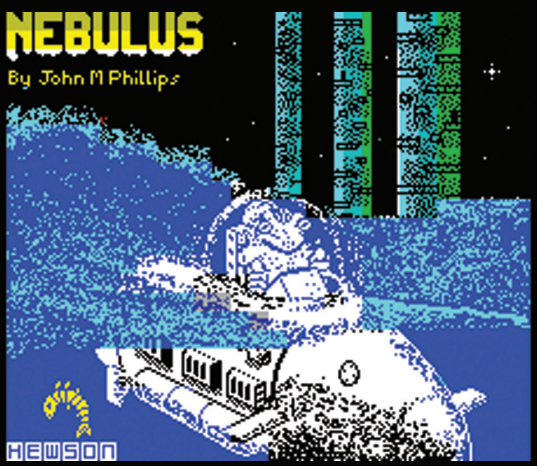
In this Firebird game, the player takes on the role of Dynar, a Xeolom warrior who, with the help of an experimental suit of armour, jet pack and anti-matter gun, must repel an invasion of Mutants called the Dariard. So far, so very good Scrabble scores. Dynar can upgrade his speed and firepower with the ubiquitous power ups dropped by vanquished enemies. Five worlds must be defended, and at the end of each one waits an oversized boss mutant that will take all of Dynar's bravery and cunning to defeat. Sidewize is an enjoyable, if derivative, scrolling shooter from developer Odin Computer Graphics – specifically Steve Wetherill and Colin Grunes. Unusually, each of the first four worlds can be tackled in any order with the fifth one unlocked once these have been successfully defended. Technically the game is excellent; the graphics are clear, precise and flicker-free. Whether it has enough variation to hold anyone's attention for very long is another matter, although *Sidewize* achieved generally good scores upon release.





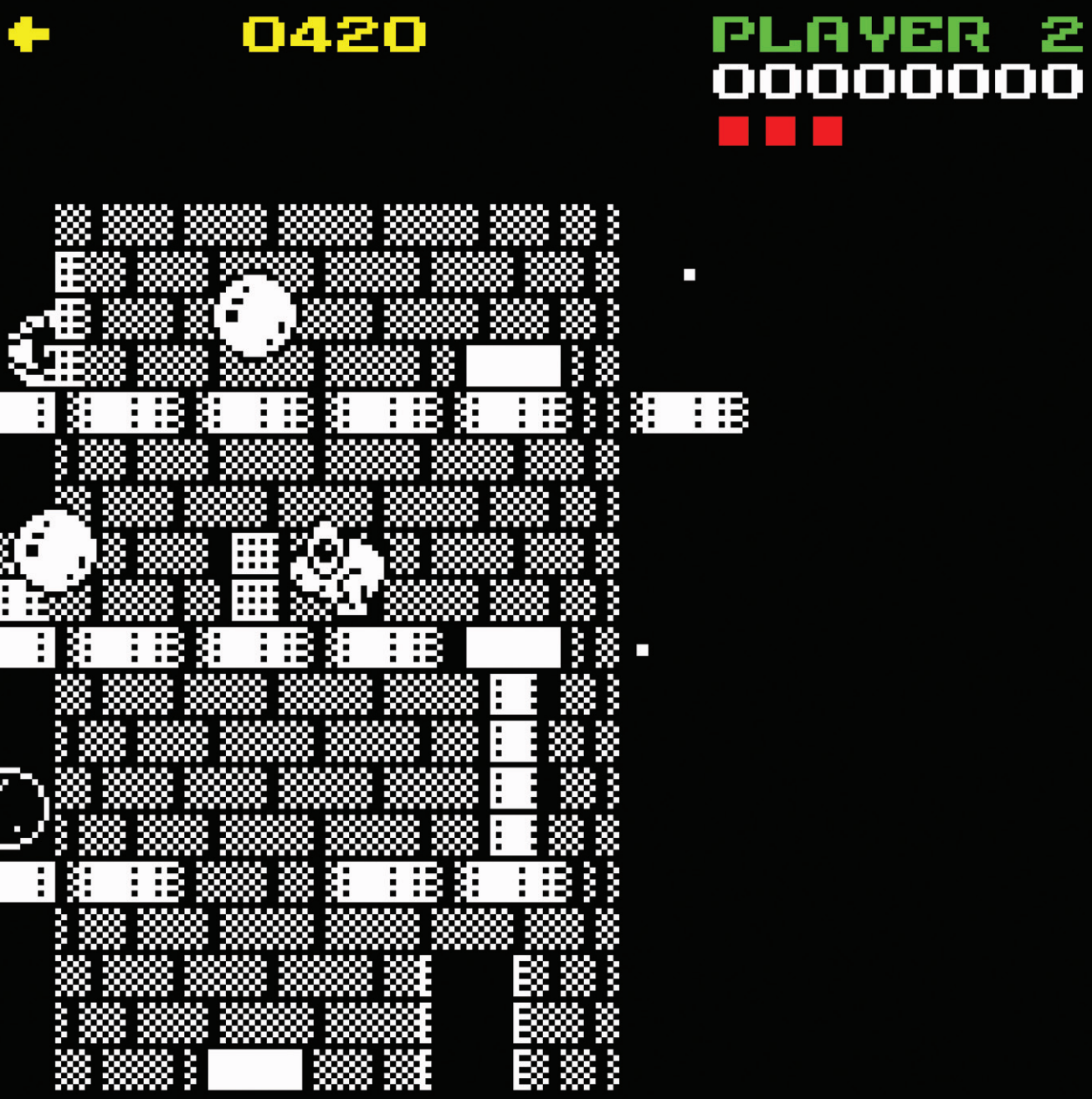
Name	:	Nebulus
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	Hewson
Author	:	John M. Phillips







This would've been a pretty ordinary platformer, if not for a simple, yet significant tweak to its presentation. Rather than running left and right, and up and down, and all around a bunch of linear platforms as we'd been trained to expect in this kind of game, *Nebulus* had you running round and round the outside of a circular tower. Your frog-like character (called Pogo), therefore, never actually moved from the centre of the screen, even though it felt as if you were sprinting in fast, dizzying circles. Platforms and ledges were dotted around the rotating brickwork, allowing you to gradually ascend the eight different towers to plant a bomb at the top and bring the whole thing down. But you weren't just running in circles and jumping on blocks. Doorways were dotted all around the circumference of the tower, and entering one brought you out at the other side. This was an essential aspect of the gameplay, and allowed you to figure out how to gain height while avoiding the many enemies out to stop you. Devilishly clever and innovative.



martech



Name	:	Nemesis the Warlock
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	Martech Games
Author	:	Jason Austin, Dave Dew, Michael Archer, Rob Hubbard





2000AD licensed games met with varying success on the ZX Spectrum. Piranha created arguably the best in the isometric *Rogue Trooper*, while Melbourne House the worst with *Judge Dredd*. This effort from Martech was coded alongside *Slaine* by Creative Reality's Jas Austin, a rabid fan of the comic whose two favourite strips happened to be the pointy-nosed alien and celtic barbarian. It falls somewhere between *Rogue Trooper* and *Judge Dredd* in terms of quality. *Nemesis The Warlock* is essentially a platform game at a time when the genre had more-or-less expired, buried under a mansion of *Jet Set Willy* clones. Each single screen presents the anti-hero with a wave of Torquemada's terminators that have to be killed before Nemesis is able to search for the exit; to do this Nemesis is armed with the sword of Excessus, a gun and his own deadly acid spit, the latter which can only be used once per level, but is deadly to everything it touches. Yet the part of the game which most remember is the method the player can use to gain access to higher platforms: jumping on the bodies of dead terminators!





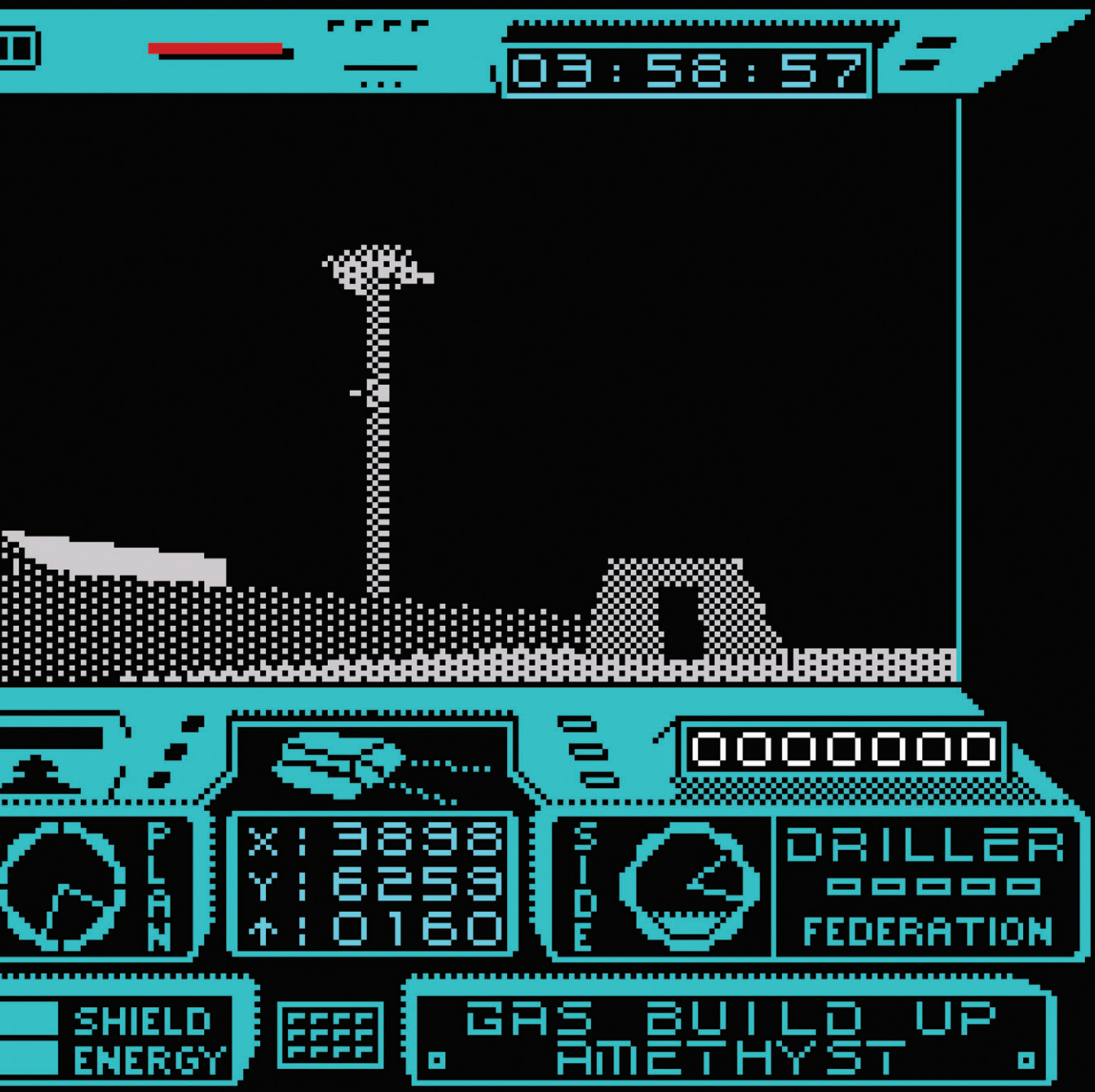
Name	:	Driller
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	Incentive Software
Author	:	Chris Andrew, Ian Andrew, Stephen Northcott, Paul Gregory







Free movement within a true and solid 3D environment had long been a dream for many ambitious 8-bit developers. Caught between the possibility of entering console development or trying something that hadn't been done before, Incentive formed an in-house team called Major Developments and began developing a graphics engine that would soon become known as Freescape - a combination of the words Freedom and Landscape. Incentive created a complex plot that involved the player navigating around the moon of Mitral and capping dangerous gas pockets. Major Developments used every trick in the book (and a few out of it) to get *Driller* working as fast as possible on the ZX Spectrum, and although it moves at a sedate one frame per second, the result is a technical masterpiece that isn't a bad game either. Reviewed almost uniformly positively at the time (with Crash in particular lavishing an extraordinary 97% score), *Driller* deserves its place not only in Spectrum history, but also as a key part of the development of videogames in general.



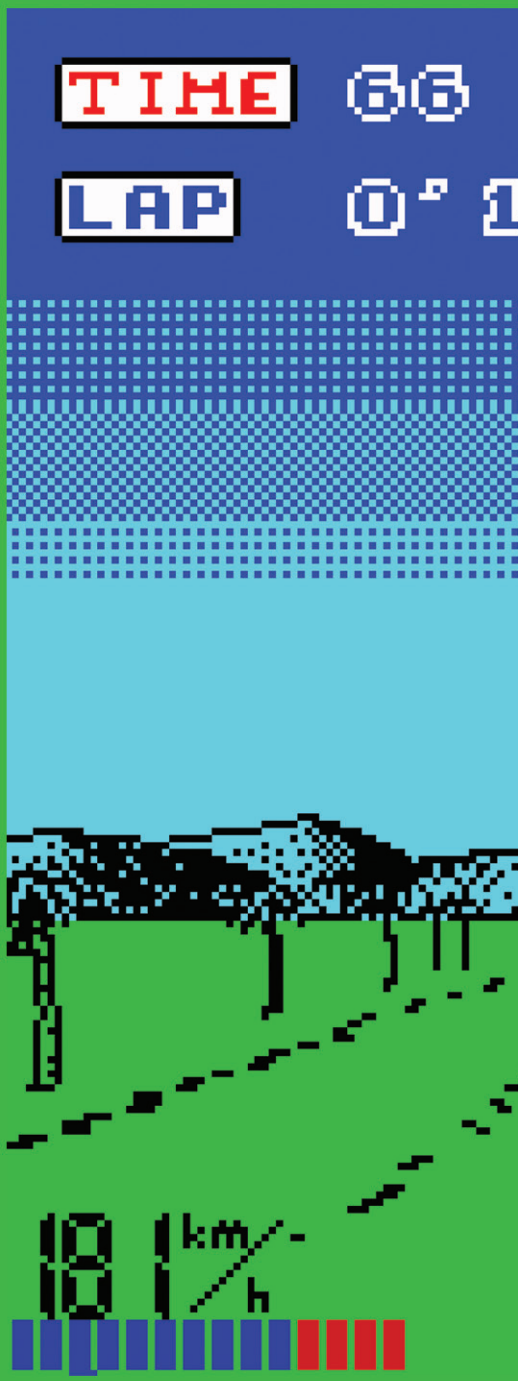




Name : Out Run
Year : 1987
Publisher : US Gold
Author : Ian Morrison, Alan Laird, Jas C. Brooke, Nick Bruty







It's the game that everyone was playing over Christmas 1987. US Gold's conversion of Sega's coin-op was perhaps the most feverishly anticipated Spectrum game ever, even though the job of converting it with any degree of accuracy was akin to threading a needle with your feet. Yet the game's developers had racing pedigree, having previously impressed with *Nightmare Rally* and *Enduro Racer* for the Spectrum. The preview screenshots looked impressive – mainly monochrome but highly detailed – and there was a real feeling that the game might just replicate the breezy racing bliss that made *Out Run* such an arcade hit. Sadly the end result captured the look but not the feel of the coin-op. The Spectrum version is just too slow to be truly enjoyable, feeling like you're stuck in low gear even when you're supposedly screaming along at 293KPH. Most Spectrum owners would have surely chosen speed over graphical detail, and ultimately that Christmas they probably wished they'd chosen the turbo-charged Spectrum conversion of *Super Hang-On* over the ambitious but listless *Out Run*.

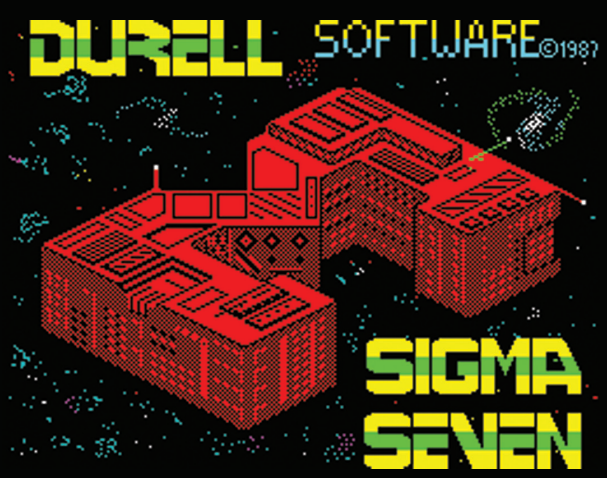


DURELL



Name	:	Sigma 7
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	Durell
Author	:	Mike A. Richardson, Julian Breeze, Jane Richardson





It's Zaxxon meets Pac-Man in this oddball 3-part game from veteran software house Durell. Your objective is to infiltrate a space factory with an inbuilt defence mechanism and shut it down. Initially you are launched into space where you take part in a diagonal shooter blasting automated swarm-mines that home in on your ship with your laser cannon. Once through the robot mines you land on the factory ship itself where you are tasked with steering your remote control drone through an isometric 3D maze, removing the power dots whilst avoiding automated robo-mines. Some dots cannot be removed and you will need to remember the pattern they form for the last stage which sees you guiding a ball around a series of buttons on the factory control unit. Buttons can only be activated whilst they flash yellow and if you can avoid the forcefield which follows you around relentlessly. Replicate the pattern from stage two successfully and the factory will be shut down. Three games in one, and none of them challenging or fun enough to lift what is basically a mediocre game.



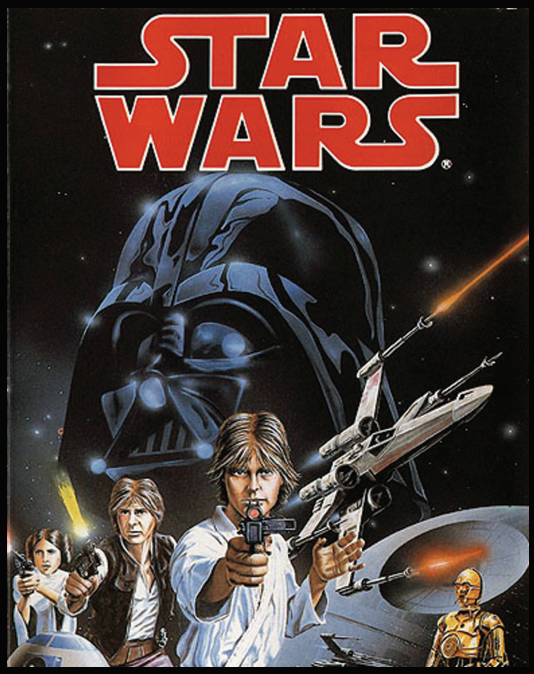




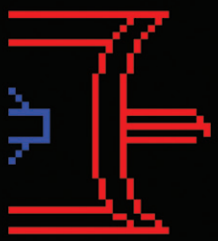


Name	:	Star Wars
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	Domark
Author	:	Andy Craven, Ciaran Gultnieks, John Cassells, Derrick Austin, David Whittaker)









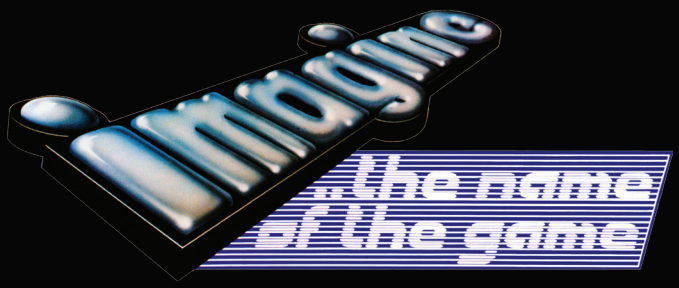




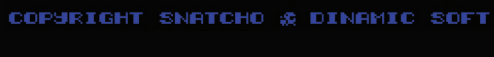


Did you know that Domark released two separate 48K versions of this coin-op conversion for the Spectrum? The first one features no in-game sound at all – not even a measly beep when you fire your X-wing's lasers – and there's even an on-screen message saying that sound was removed because it slowed down the game too much. The second release, which was included as part of the later Star Wars Trilogy compilation, does include sound and the game speed isn't affected to any degree. This version also includes a number of tweaks, most noticeably an improved Death Star explosion. Why Domark didn't just release a 128K version with AY sound is baffling, but at least a 'fixed' version is available and it proves to be an excellent version of the iconic Atari coin-op. We all know that the Spectrum is adept at pushing wireframe graphics around the screen and it doesn't disappoint here, particularly when replicating the trench run, one of the most thrilling gaming stages ever devised.

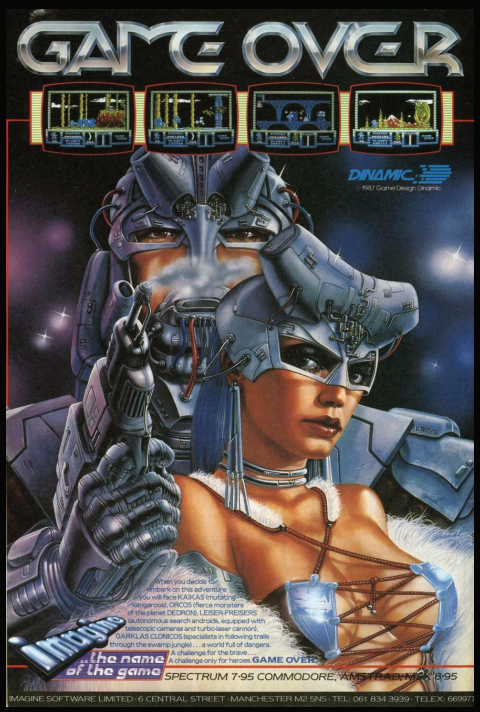


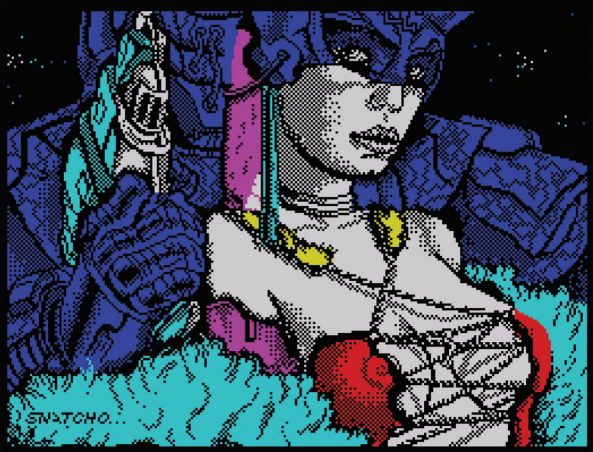


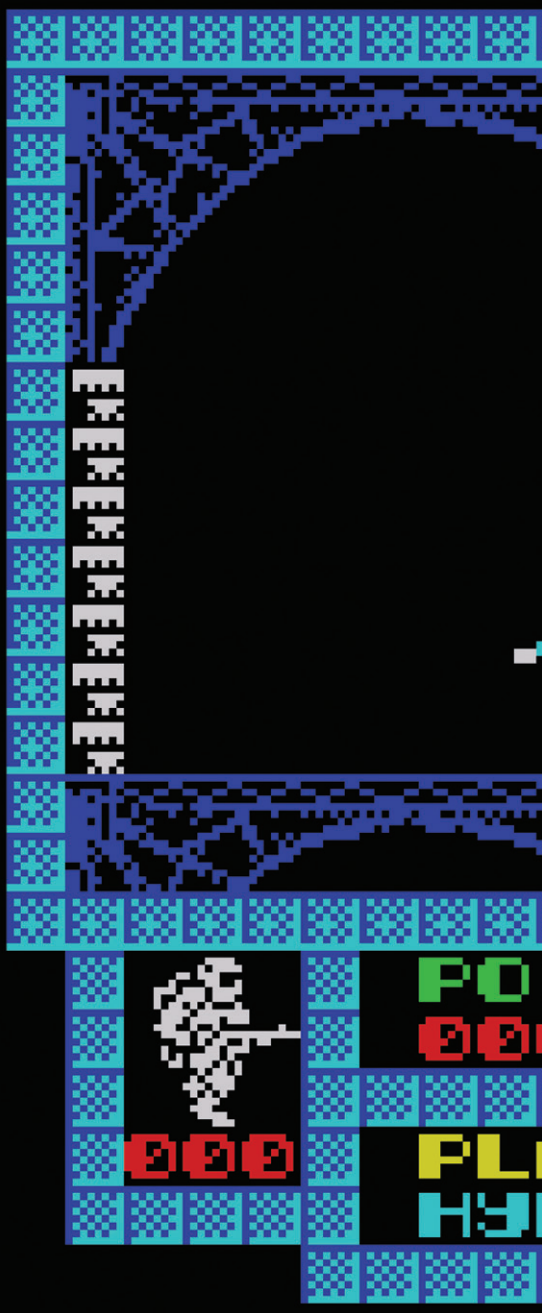




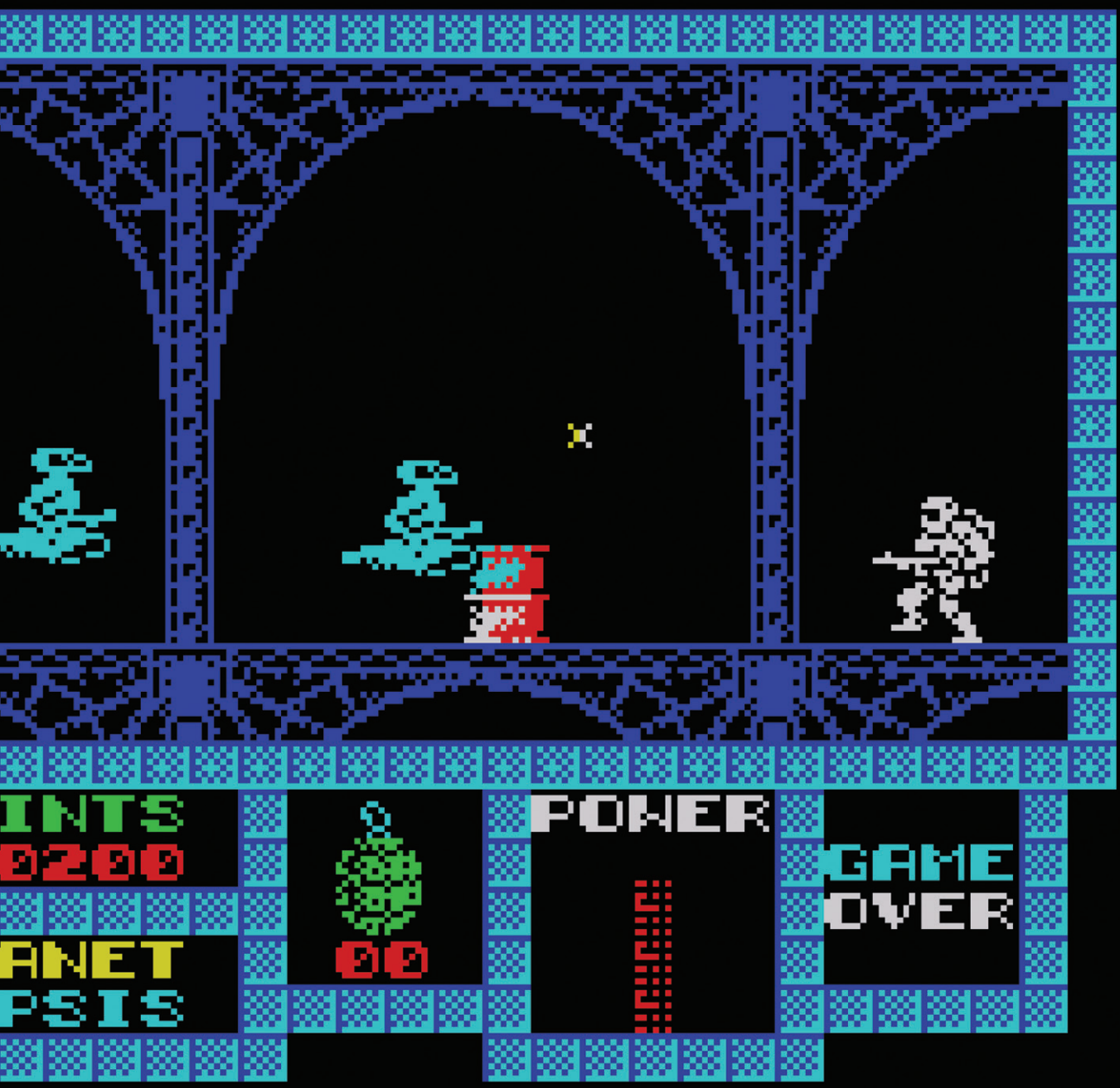
Name	:	Game Over
Year	:	1987
Publisher	:	Imagine Software
Author	:	Snatcho







Mention this game title to most Spectrum (or indeed 8-bit) fans and you're likely to be greeted with stifled sniggers or guffaws rather than hallowed memories of the game itself. The reason for this was a controversial advertising campaign that pictured the hero (Arkos) standing menacingly over evil empress Gremla, whose impressive chest appeared just a little too expansive for her metallic clothing. Magazines such as Crash covered up the offending female appendage with either bespoke artwork or a conveniently-placed screenshot. Your Sinclair had no such issues and even gleefully gave away a free poster in all its original glory. But what of the game itself? While slightly more playable than many of Dinamic's other titles, *Game Over* is an unexceptional run-'n'-gunner which is ruined graphically by some rampant attribute clash. Playing Gremla's former Lieutenant, it's your mission to defeat the evil empress and her minions, a task that frequently presents perverse difficulty spikes. It's a shame because the main character controls quite sharply – more balanced gameplay and this could have been a hit.





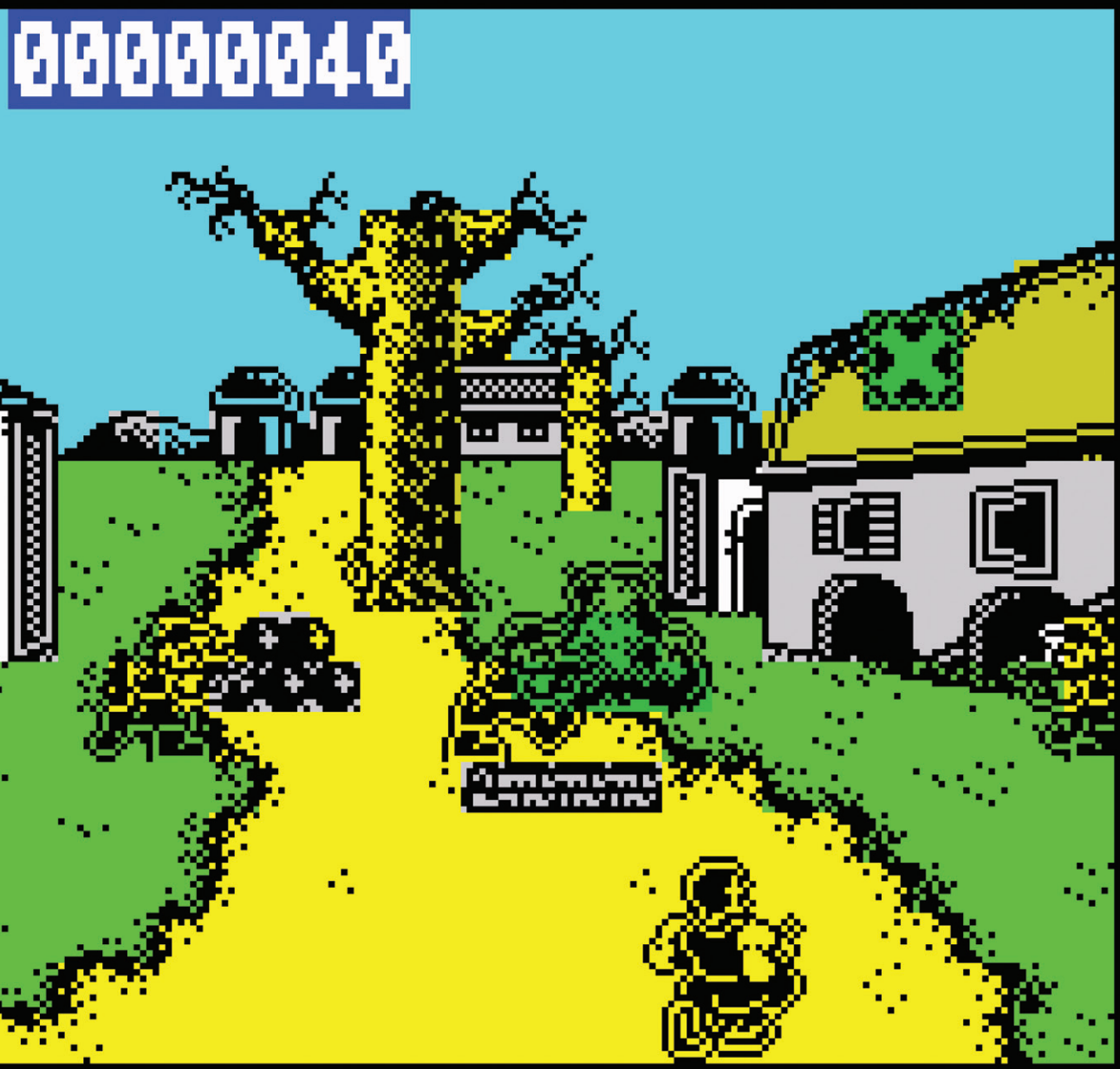
Name	:	Cabal
Year	:	1989
Publisher	:	Ocean Software
Author	:	James Bagley, Charles Davies, Keith Tinman







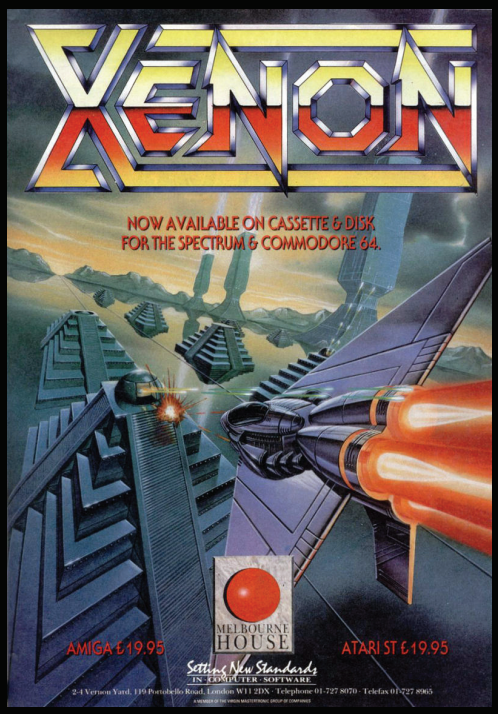
By 1989 the Spectrum was starting to look a little primitive in comparison to the 16-bit Amiga and Atari ST. Yet coders such as Jim Bagley (Special FX) seemed to revel in pushing the Sinclair computer to its limits, and with assistance from talented graphic artists, classics such as *Cabal* continued to delight Spectrum owners. Another arcade conversion, *Cabal,* is similar to games such as *Operation Wolf* and *Thunderbolt* where you play one man taking on an army of enemies, many driving tanks and flying helicopters. The one big difference with *Cabal* is that your character is actually on screen and can wander along the bottom horizontally while dealing death to the bad guys above. The soldier is armed with an infinite-ammo machine gun and a limited supply of grenades, useful for blowing up armour and buildings in a cascade of colourful blocks, which sometimes reveals bonuses or power ups. *Cabal* is an utterly unoriginal game but is so well-designed, attractive and fun to play, that you just won't care.



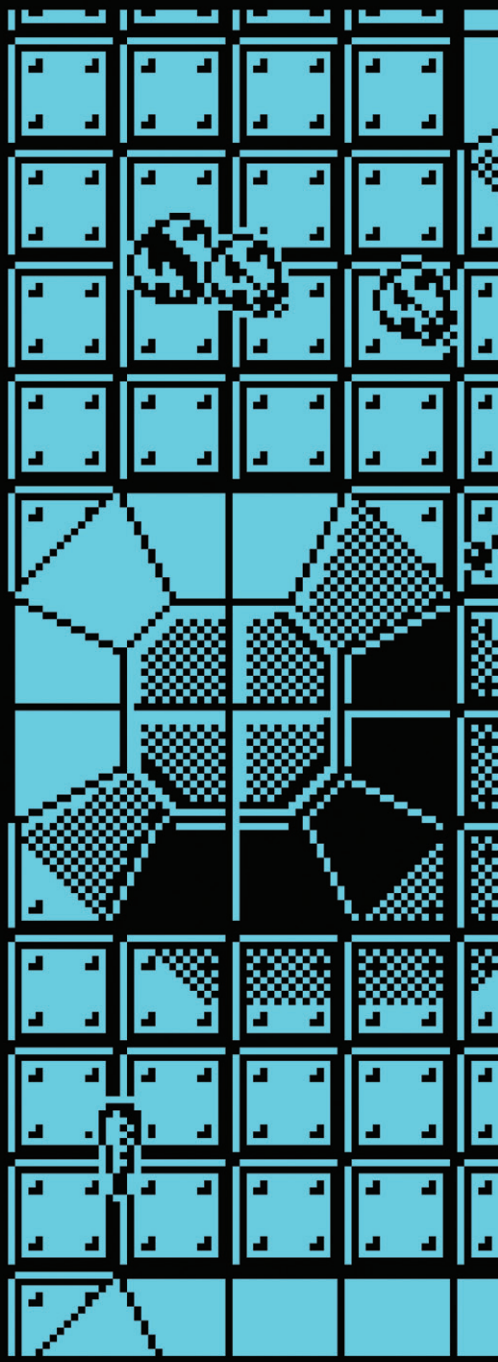


Melbourne House

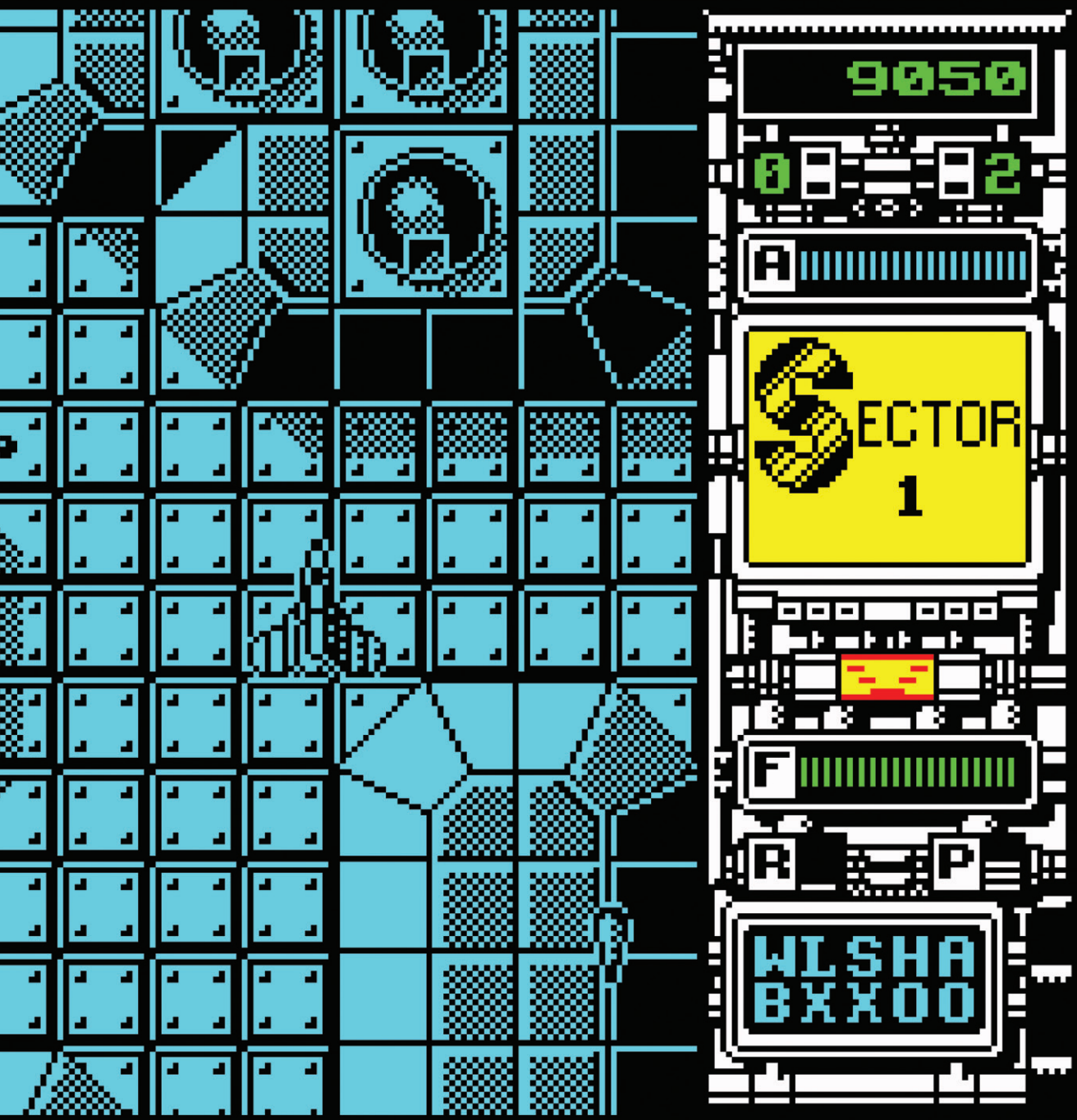
Name	:	Xenon
Year	:	1988
Publisher	:	Melbourne House
Author	:	Jason Cowling, Lee Cawley, Tiny Williams, David Whittaker







Captain Xod is in a bit of a pickle. Dastardly aliens have him penned in and as the only other federation ship in range, it's up to you to battle through sixteen vertically-scrolling zones of vicious enemies to rescue him. It's an unoriginal concept, but *Xenon* offers enough gameplay to be considered a classic by many. Converted from the Atari ST version, it's an admirable effort, although lacking the ST's lovely colourful graphics and aural delights. While it fails to live up to the effusive tags of 'thinking man's shooter' and 'strategic shoot-'em-up', it's a decent game thanks to the optional vehicles (a ground-based saucer or faster fighter aircraft) and an array of power ups from the boring (fuel, gun) to exciting (wings, laser). Converted by Icon Design, *Xenon* reviewed very well upon release and is one of the better shoot-'em-ups of the Spectrum's latter years.

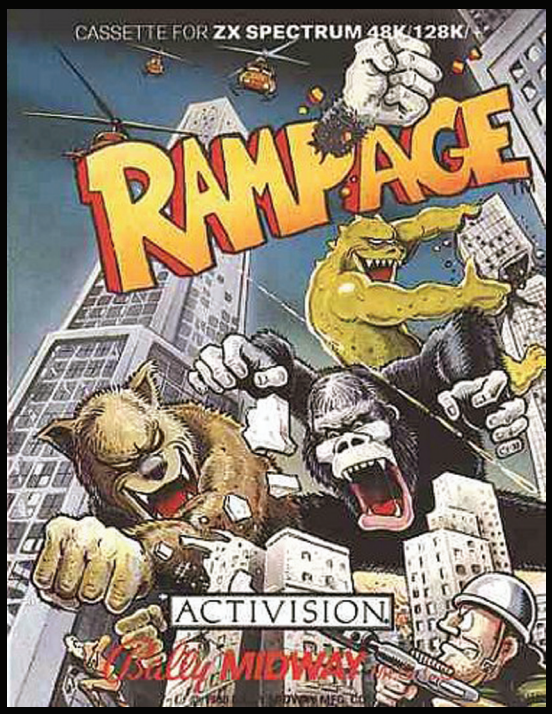


ACTIVISION
HOME COMPUTER SOFTWARE

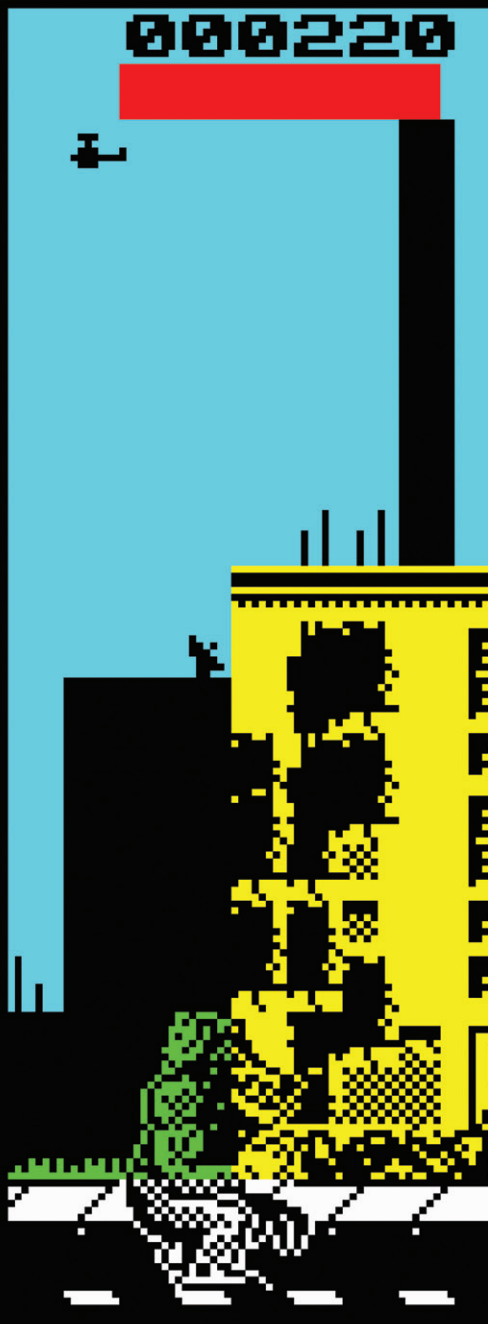
RAMPAGE™

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CODING BY CATALYST CODERS.
A SOFTWARE STUDIOS PRODUCTION.

Name	:	Rampage
Year	:	1988
Publisher	:	Activision
Author	:	Bob Pape, Mark A. Jones, Colin Tuck







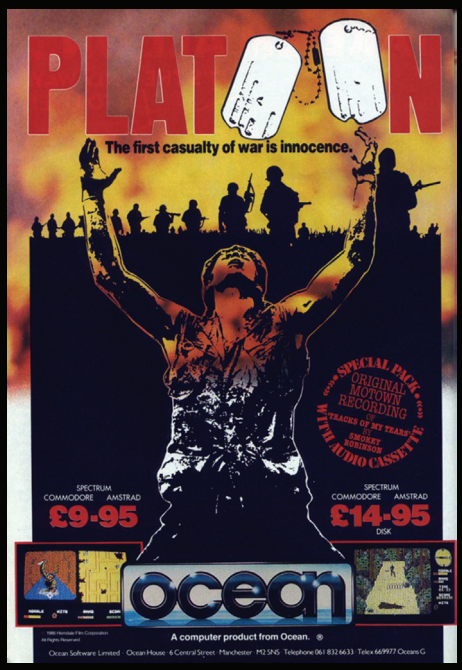
A year or so after its original release in the arcades, Atari's popular smash 'em up finally came punching, kicking and generally demolishing its way onto Sir Clive's finest. Although potentially making for some interesting hand gymnastics on the Spectrum's diminutive keyboard, the game was nevertheless designed to be playable by 1 to 3 players. Sinclair or Kempston joystick options were also available. Each player chooses to control either George, Lizzie or Ralph; people who have been mutated into gigantic monsters with the ability of bringing down buildings with their bare fists, claws or paws. Bullet spitting helicopters, tanks, snipers in windows and falls from crumbling buildings all conspire to reduce your health meter which can be replenished by eating various food stuffs and even city dwellers who randomly appear at their windows to see what all the commotion is. The game is over when all of the monsters have been returned to human form. Often graphically confusing (especially with all 3 players on screen), and considering the Spectrum's limitations, Activision didn't do a bad job at all.

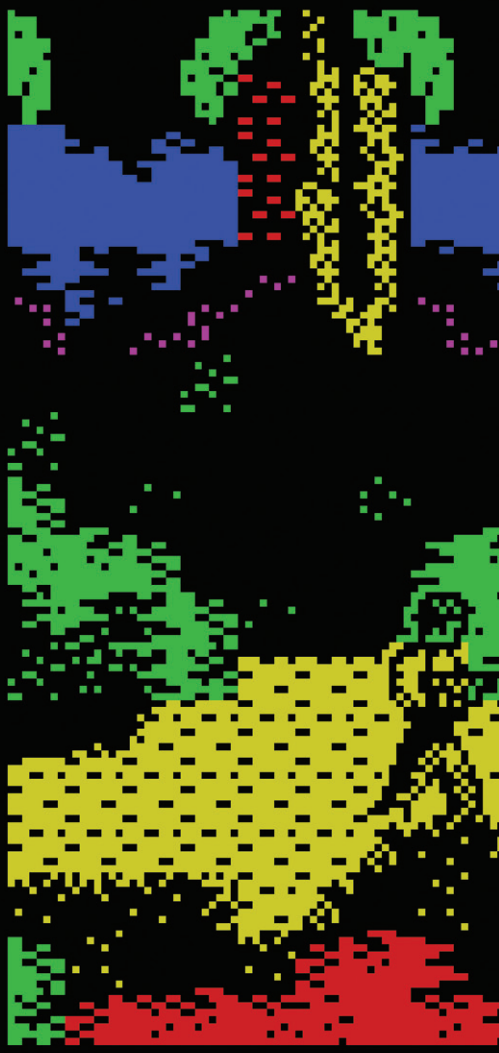






Name	:	Platoon
Year	:	1988
Publisher	:	Ocean Software
Author	:	Sean Pearce, David Lyttle, Simon Butler, Mark R. Jones, Andy Sleigh, David Whittaker









Platoon was Ocean's big movie tie-in of 1988. The movie had been a smash hit, and its subject matter appeared to suit the videogame format well. The game is a multi-section effort, a standard which Ocean had already exploited for many of its licenses. The first part has the player in control of several soldiers stranded in the deadly Vietnamese jungle, fending off hidden snipers, booby traps and trigger-happy enemies. Find a box of explosives, blow up the bridge to get to the village and it's off to the next section which takes place in an underground tunnel network. Gameplay here is different from the traditional side-on view. When an enemy appears, the view switches to first-person and the player has a short time to get their shot in before the dastardly commie strikes. The final part of the game tasks you with dealing with the slightly-mad Sergeant Barnes, who must be eliminated from his foxhole via five well-placed grenades. *Platoon* is a diverse and excellent game and deserved its plaudits upon release.

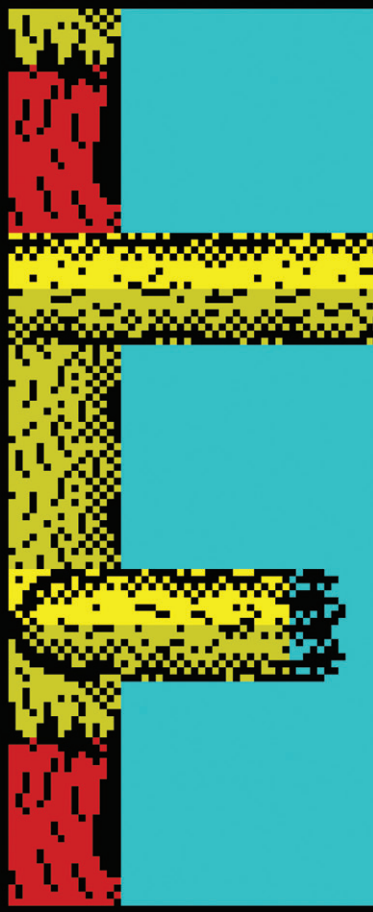






Name	:	Bionic Commando
Year	:	1988
Publisher	:	Go!
Author	:	Mike Follin, Andrew R. Threlfall, Tim Follin







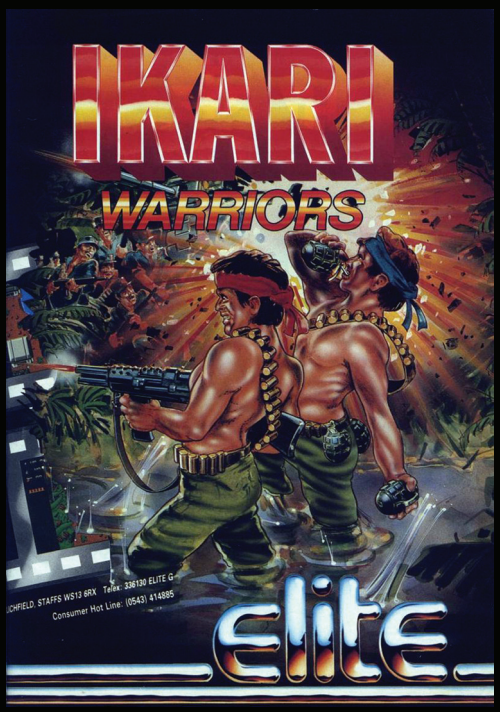


Bionic Commando is one of those wonderful retro titles that embodies the chaotic nature of 80s game development. The original Japanese version was called Top Secret, but was renamed so it could be sold in the US as a 'sequel' to Capcom's already successful, yet entirely unrelated run 'n' gun *Commando*. While the NES home version was radically different to the arcade machine, the Spectrum saw a hybrid of all these convolutions. It received a great coin-op adaptation that cast players in the role of the Americanised *Commando* sequel, equipped with a bionic grappling gun arm that was used to move between the ever-climbing platforms. It's also notable as one of the few platform games ever made in which you're unable to jump. Instead *Bionic Commando* makes use of the grappling hook to swing across gaps and between levels, which is a unique gameplay mechanic that's rarely been duplicated. Certainly it wasn't an easy game, but the lush, colourful visuals and super-fast action made it an instant hit, and a beloved classic for Spec-chums everywhere.

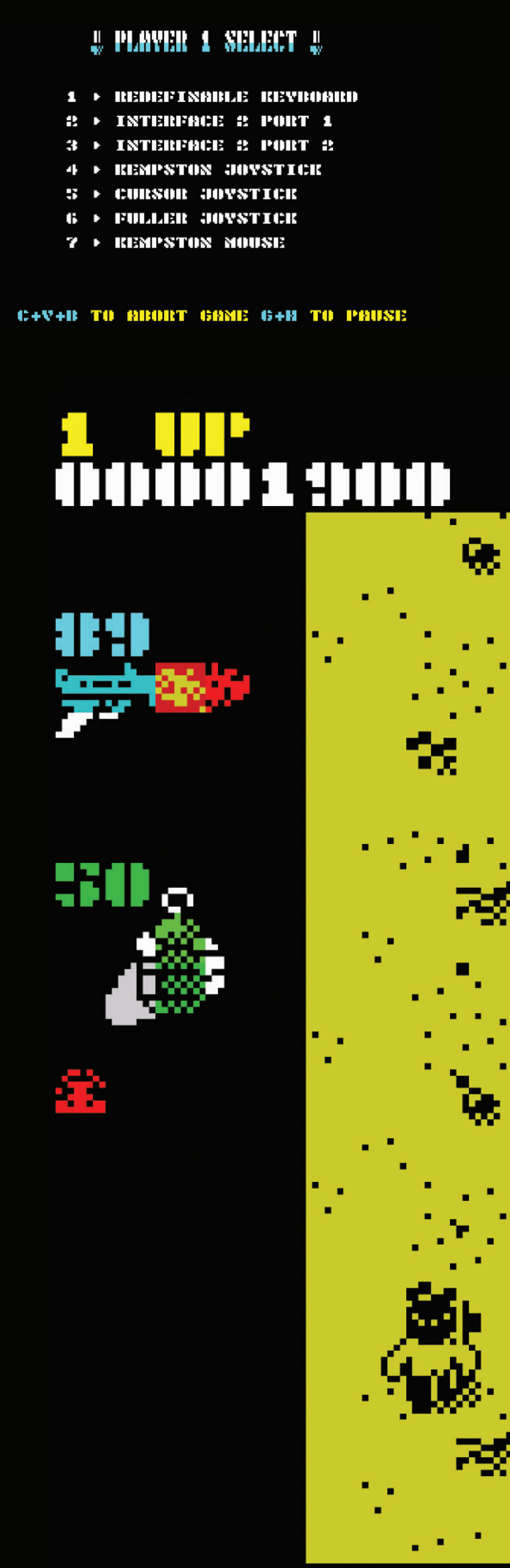


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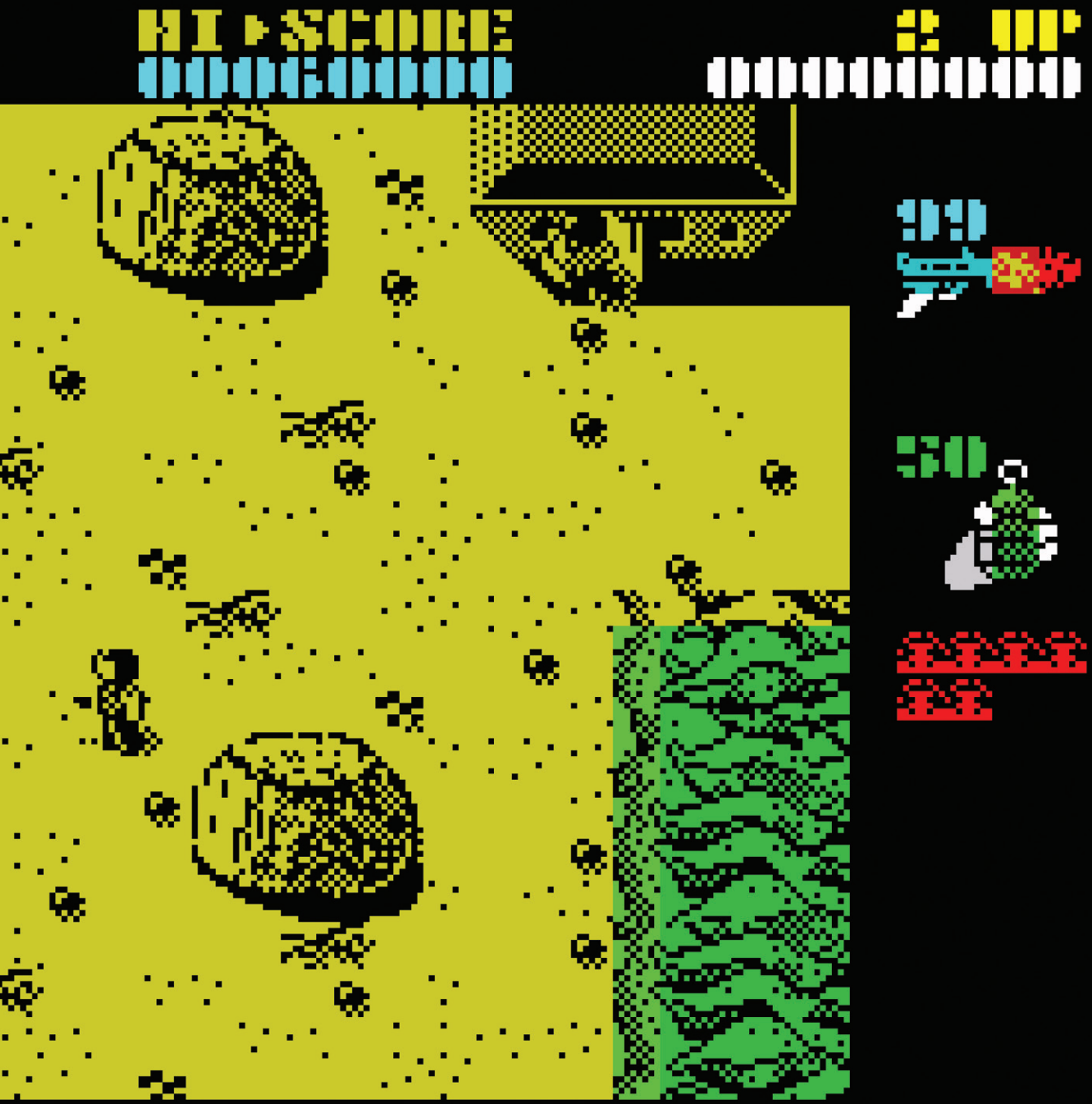
Name	:	Ikari Warriors
Year	:	1988
Publisher	:	Elite Systems Ltd
Author	:	David Shea, Nick Jones





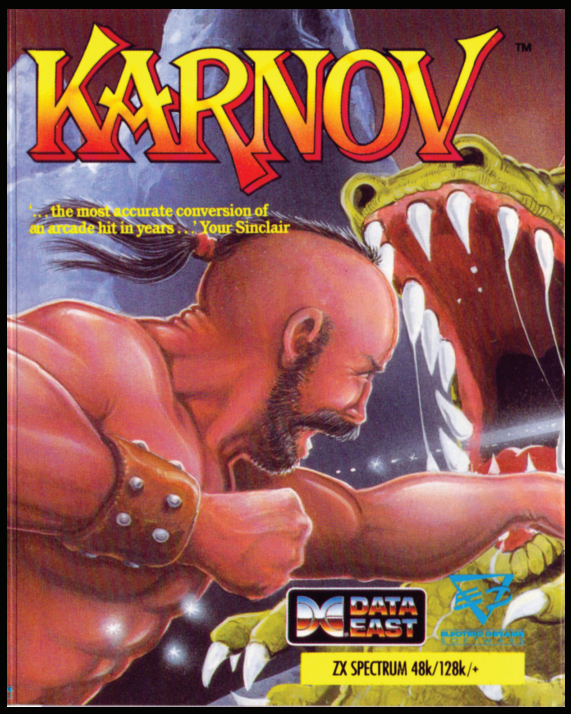


This arcade conversion had a troubled gestation. Originally previewed in the Spectrum magazines at the end of 1986, Elite finally managed to release the game 15 months later when the anticipation had greatly cooled off. Essentially a two-player version of *Commando*, the players took control of two soldiers, dropped behind enemy lines and charged with rescuing an American general, captured by a band of naughty South American revolutionaries. In addition to a machine gun (with infinite bullets), the players can also pick up grenades and even hop into enemy tanks – provided they have fuel to get them going. Each player has two modes of firing: fixed where the soldier just fires up the screen or multi-directional where the soldier can be manipulated to fire in any direction. *Ikari Warriors* is a worthy addition to Spectrum run 'n' gunners although the suspicion will always remain that it would have been much more successful (and better reviewed) had it been released, as presumably intended, in time for Christmas 1986.

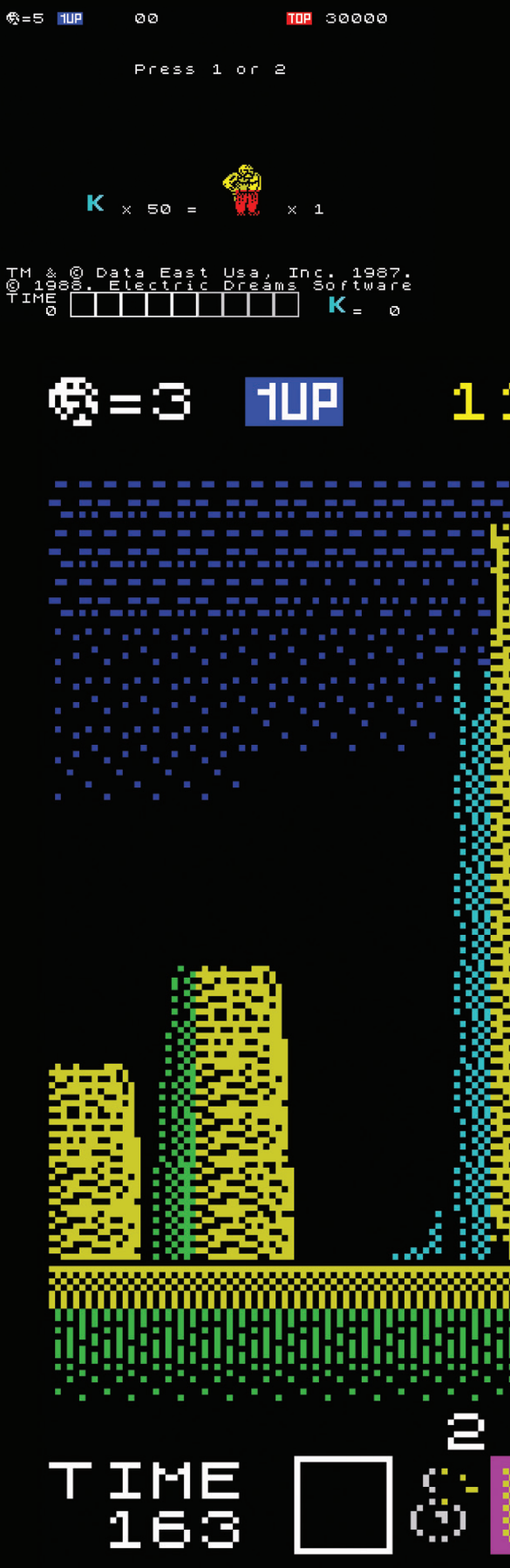


Electric Dreams SOFTWARE

Name	:	Karnov
Year	:	1988
Publisher	:	Electric Dreams
Author	:	John May, John White







Karnov wasn't the most popular of arcade machines, so it was somewhat surprising when this conversion appeared in 1988 on the ZX Spectrum. Released by Electric Dreams (who were backed by the formidable weight of Activision) and developed by Mr. Micro, it's a decent stab at recreating the colourful, if rock hard, original with one annoying technical flaw. The coders behind Karnov employed a system where a black border surrounded each sprite. While this failed to totally eradicate attribute clash, it helped make the game at least playable in multiple colours. However, the game lacks a lot of playability thanks to its juddering scrolling routine. Once *Karnov* reaches a certain point, the whole screen jerks its way slowly across, rendering the game virtually useless for a second or two, which is a shame considering the rest of it is decent fun. On a more amusing note, Electric Dreams appeared to have ported the Spectrum version, warts and all, to the Commodore 64, which created a predictable backlash, from Zzap64! in particular.







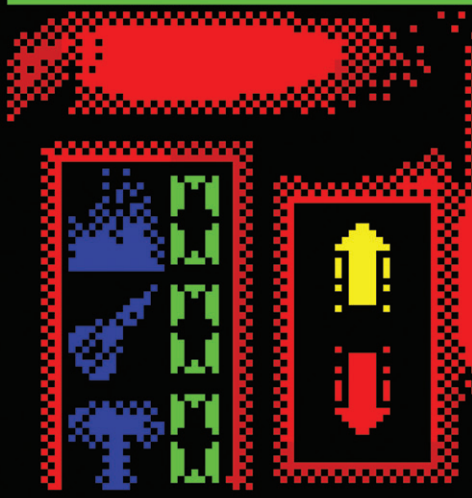
Name : Overlander
Year : 1988
Publisher : Elite Software Ltd
Author : Mark Haigh-Hutchinson, Gary Tonge, Peter Tattersall



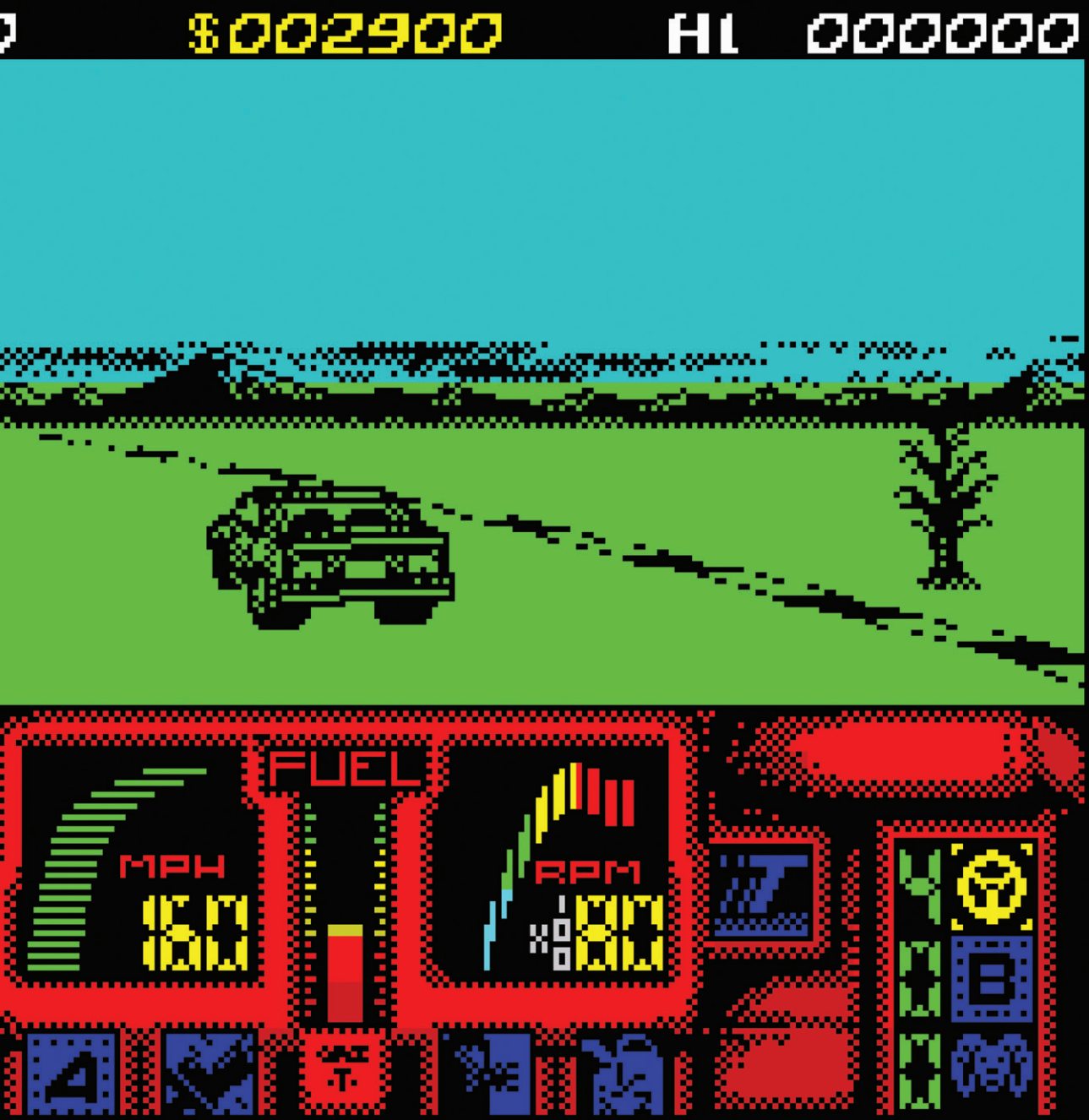








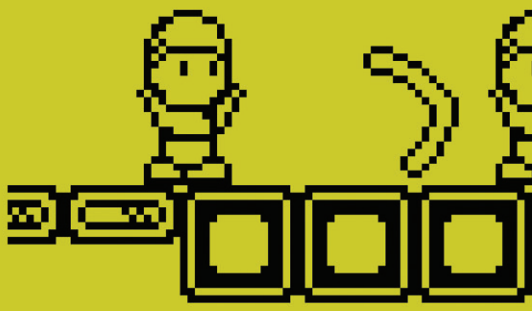
Head into the wastelands Mad Max style, in this post-apocalyptic driving game where the earth has been scorched dry. Set in the year 2025, most of Earth's inhabitants have been forced underground but as an *Overlander* you get to deliver vital supplies to other underground cities whilst avoiding/destroying other rather less civilised overlanders out to kill you. You can choose to move cargo for the Federation or for the Crimelords, the choice of which alters the size of your reward. Half of the reward is paid up front, enabling you to buy weapons, fuel and other upgrades for your car so choosing correctly is important. Gameplay sees you driving your souped-up vehicle out in the wastelands and it is here you will do battle with the inhabitants of this hellish world. Suicide motorbikers, armour plated cars striving to ram you off the road and pick-up trucks with thugs on board taking shots at you all aim to spoil your day. Responsive controls, large well-drawn vehicles and a sublimely rendered undulating road make this one of the best Spectrum based driving games ever.

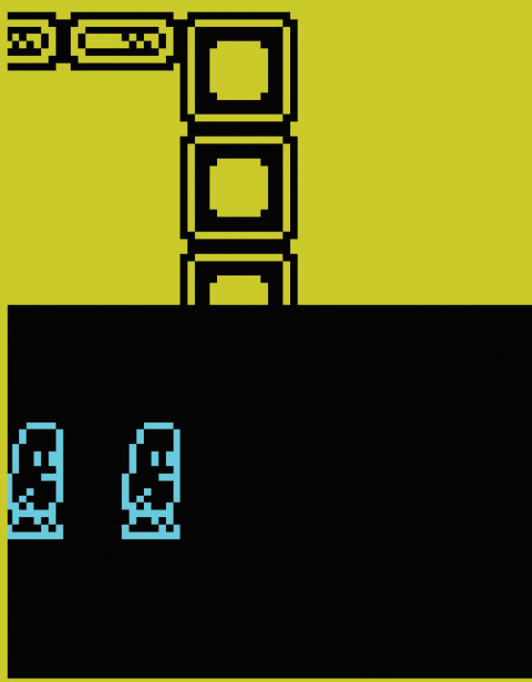




Name	:	The New Zealand Story
Year	:	1989
Publisher	:	Ocean Software
Author	:	Gerald Weatherup, Jonathan Dunn



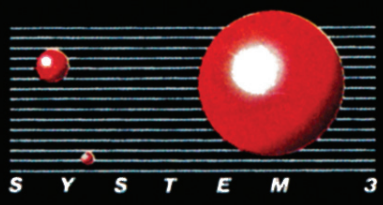






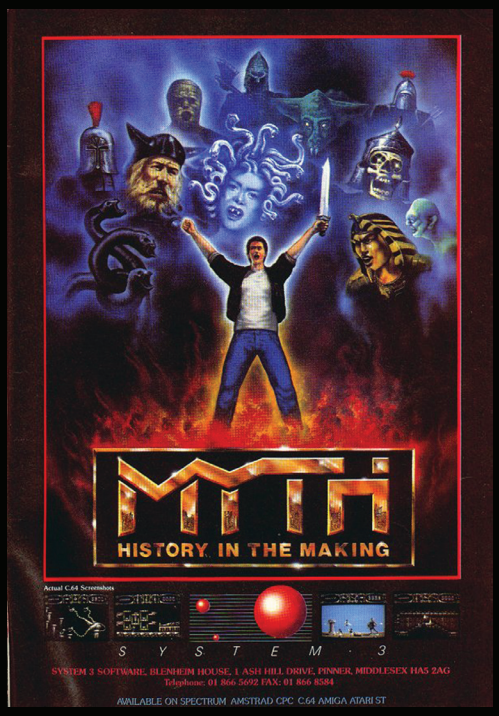
Taito's cutesy arcade games hit the Spectrum with aplomb. Arriving after the co-op classic *Bubble Bobble* but before its masterful follow-up Rainbow Islands, *The New Zealand Story* is a platform game that's more varied and expansive than either of the Bub and Bob games. You play a courageous kiwi who must rescue his fluffy friends from a wily old seal. You have various weapons and flying gizmos at your disposal to help you achieve this, and you can even don some goggles and go for an underwater swim. The whole game is an absolute delight to play and there are enough levels to keep you entertained for ages. The only downside is the monochrome display – the coin-op is awash with colour so it's a shame to see the cartoony graphics depicted in bland yellow and black. Still, the game plays true to the original and that's what really counts. The lack of colour certainly didn't deter readers of Crash magazine who voted it as the Best Coin-op Conversion of 1989.



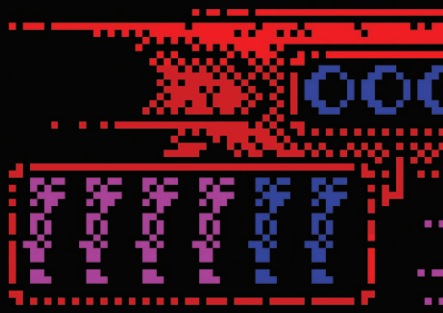


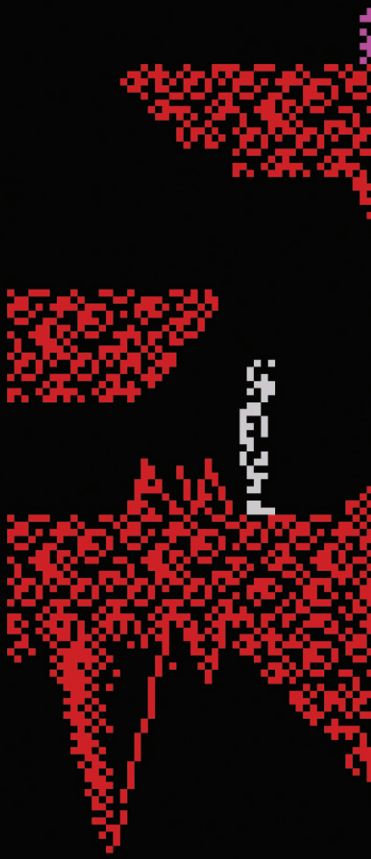


Name	:	Myth: History in the Making
Year	:	1989
Publisher	:	System 3 Software
Author	:	Neil Dodwell, Dave Dew

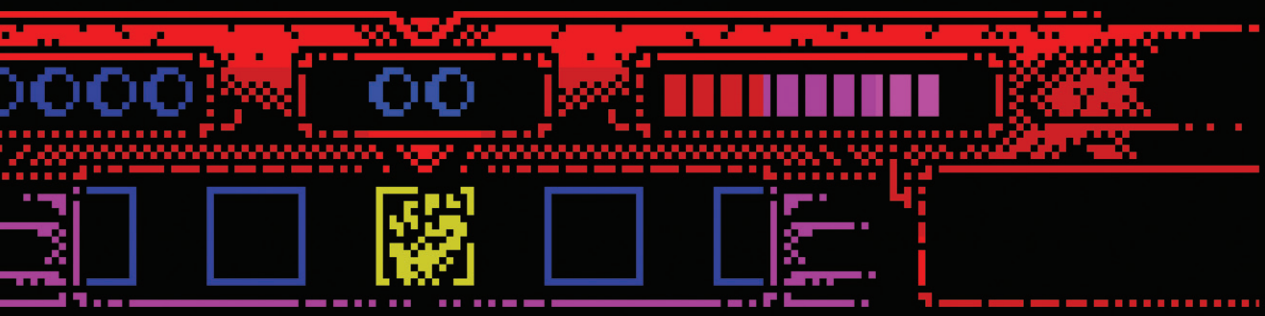


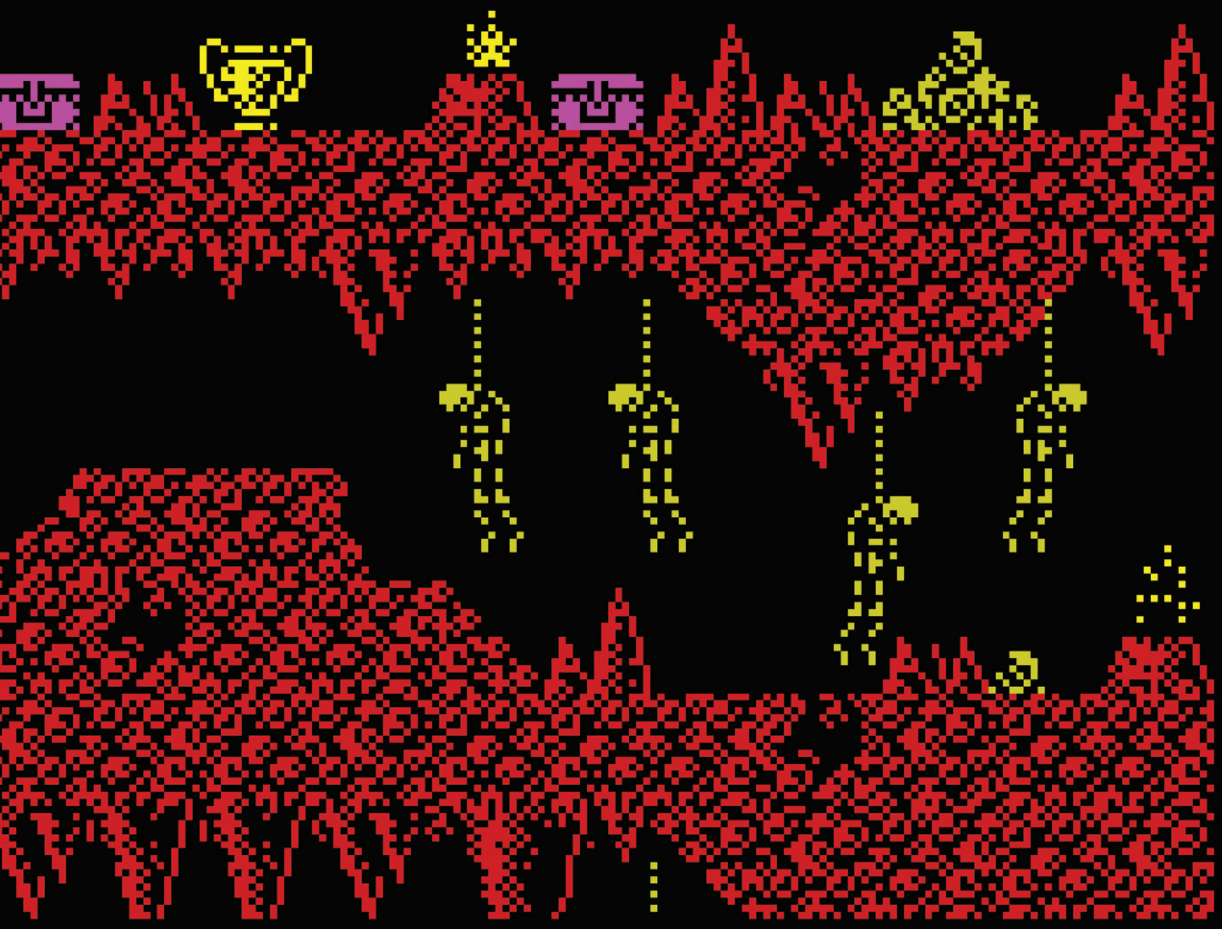






This excellent game from System 3 was unfortunately only released in the twilight years of the ZX Spectrum; had it seen the light of day just two years earlier it would surely have been the massive hit it deserved to be. The original idea for *Myth* came from System 3 boss Mark Cale who wanted to develop a game based around ancient legends. The player takes on the role of a modern mortal, summoned to do battle with a time-travelling demon across ancient Greece, Egypt and Scandinavia. With the game originating on the Commodore 64, when it came to porting to the Spectrum, its team quickly realised they would struggle to replicate the graphics and style of the game. They pitched their own version, and while there are some similarities, the two games are quite different in terms of gameplay. It's essentially about puzzle-solving while avoiding the various denizens of each respective era. Particularly impressive are the graphics and animation, most notably with the malevolent skeletons that pepper the Hades level.



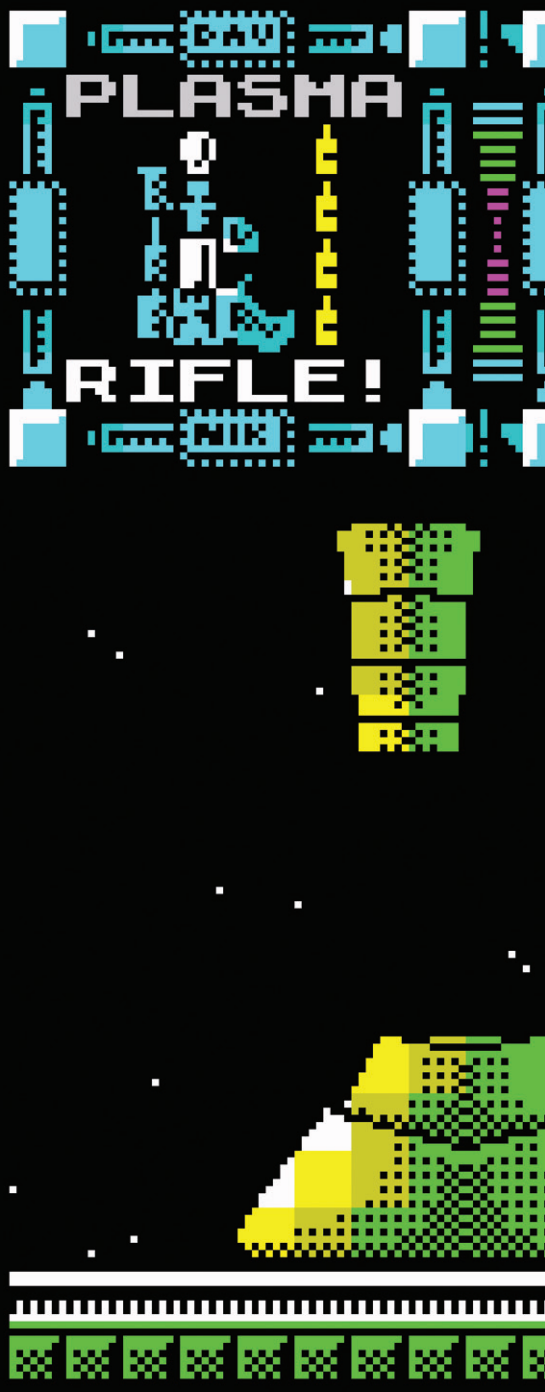




Name	:	Dan Dare III: The Escape
Year	:	1990
Publisher	:	Virgin Games
Author	:	David Perry, Nick Bruty, Simon Butler







One of the trends that blighted many a late era Spectrum game was the reliance on monochrome graphics. Two colours meant no ugly colour clash and often faster screen updates, but the overall result was a drab display. *Dan Dare III* doesn't subscribe to that tendency and hurls the Spectrum's glorious palette at the screen with barely a care. Unlike the previous Dan Dare games the emphasis is on pure shooting action as you attempt to flee the Mekon menace. Unfortunately, this frenzied approach results in a very short game – there are just five levels to blaze through and even novice gamers should be able to aid Dan's escape in just a few attempts. Does the game's dazzling style and intense gameplay make up for the lack of substance? That largely depends on whether you paid full whack for it back in the day. If you did (like I did) then it was a disappointment for sure, but as a showcase Spectrum title it's right up there. Just look at how bloody lovely it looks.





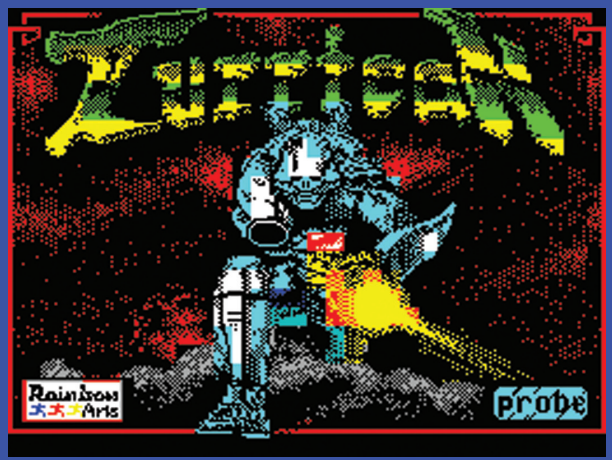


Name	:	Turrican
Year	:	1990
Publisher	:	Rainbow Arts
Author	:	Daren White, Jason Green











Morgul, after being banished to another dimension for bringing fear and nightmares to the whole of humanity, is up to his old tricks again and it is your job as the warrior *Turrican* to stop him. Set over five worlds and 13 huge levels (over 1300 screens!), your aim is to defeat the on-screen baddies, and eventually Morgul himself with anything you can find. And there is a lot of stuff strewn all around these beautifully rendered landscapes. There are weapons galore, power ups and diamonds abound, often in hidden rooms or floating invisibly which is one of the great strengths of this game - the ability to go off-piste and search out secret areas. You can also transform into a gyroscope three times per life, which renders you invincible, destroying enemies on contact. Blast 'em ups never came any more epic than this on the Spectrum. *Turrican* is colourful, fast and full of smoothly animated and widely varied enemies. Add to this the enormous arsenal of weapons that can be wrought on your foes, and you get a game that is well deserving of the many journalistic accolades it accumulated.



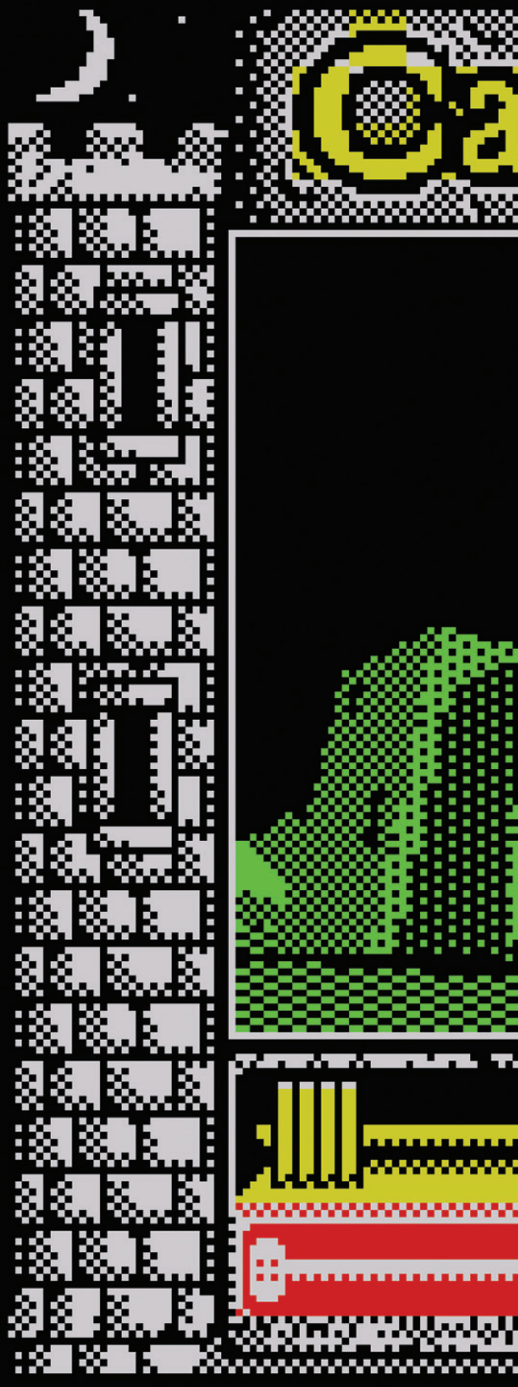
INCENTIVE



Name	:	Castle Master
Year	:	1990
Publisher	:	Incentive Software
Author	:	Ian Andrew, Chris Andrew , Mike Salmon, Mel Croucher, Matt Furniss







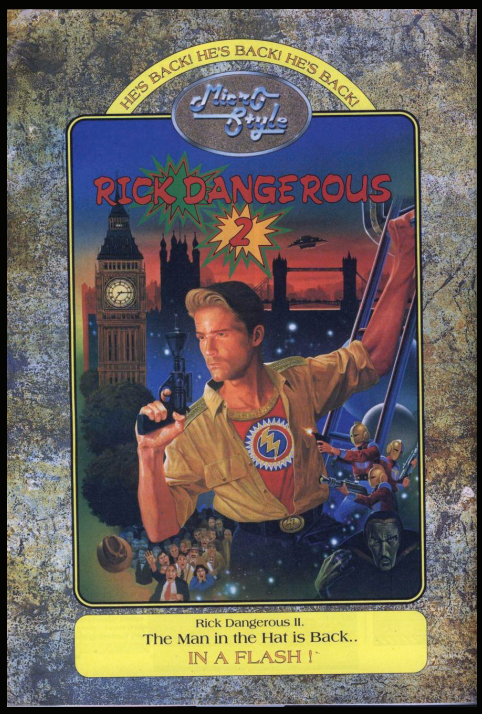
It surprisingly took until 1990 for Incentive to implement its Freescape engine into a fantasy setting after having tried sci-fi (*Driller* and *Dark Side*) and 1930s Egypt (*Total Eclipse*). The engine, which allowed for totally free movement within a solid 3D environment, is an impressive achievement on the ZX Spectrum, but is inevitably hamstrung by the computer's relative lack of processing power. *Castle Master*, with its elaborate locations and cunning traps, designed by none other than Mel Croucher, is as slow and laborious as Freescape's previous incarnations. Coded once more by Incentive's in-house team, Major Developments, the player's objective is to rescue their twin, held captive within the towers of Castle Eternity by Magister the Castle Master. A drawn out story from Croucher sets the scene and provides clues, and like the other Freescape games, careful and considered progress is the order of the day rather than frantic arcade action.



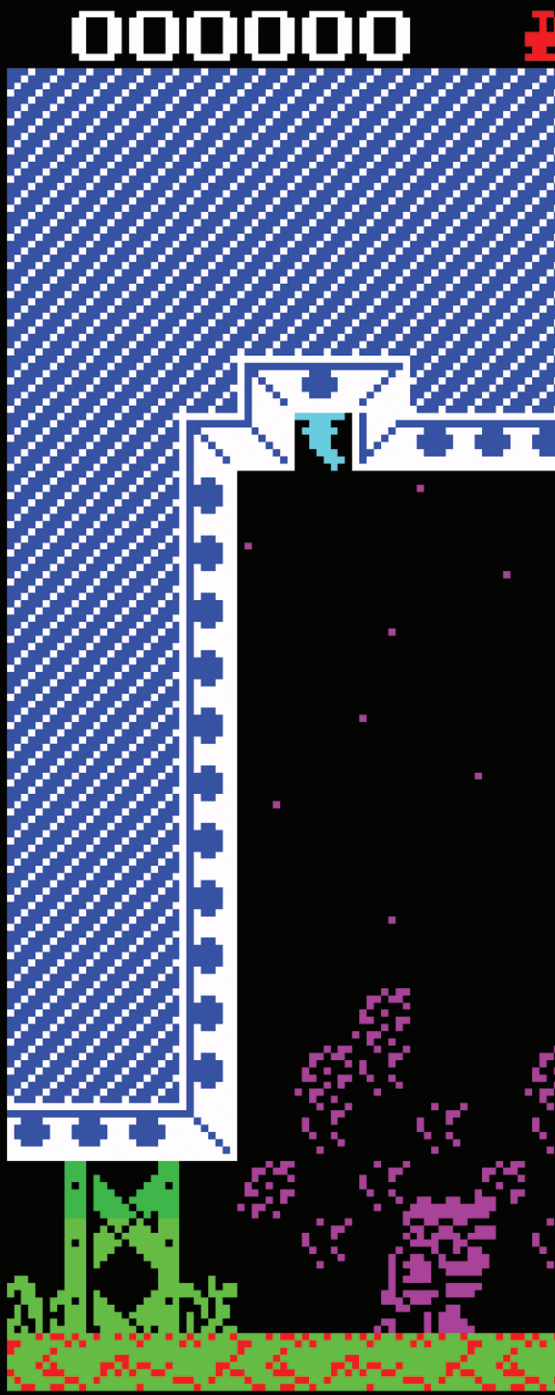




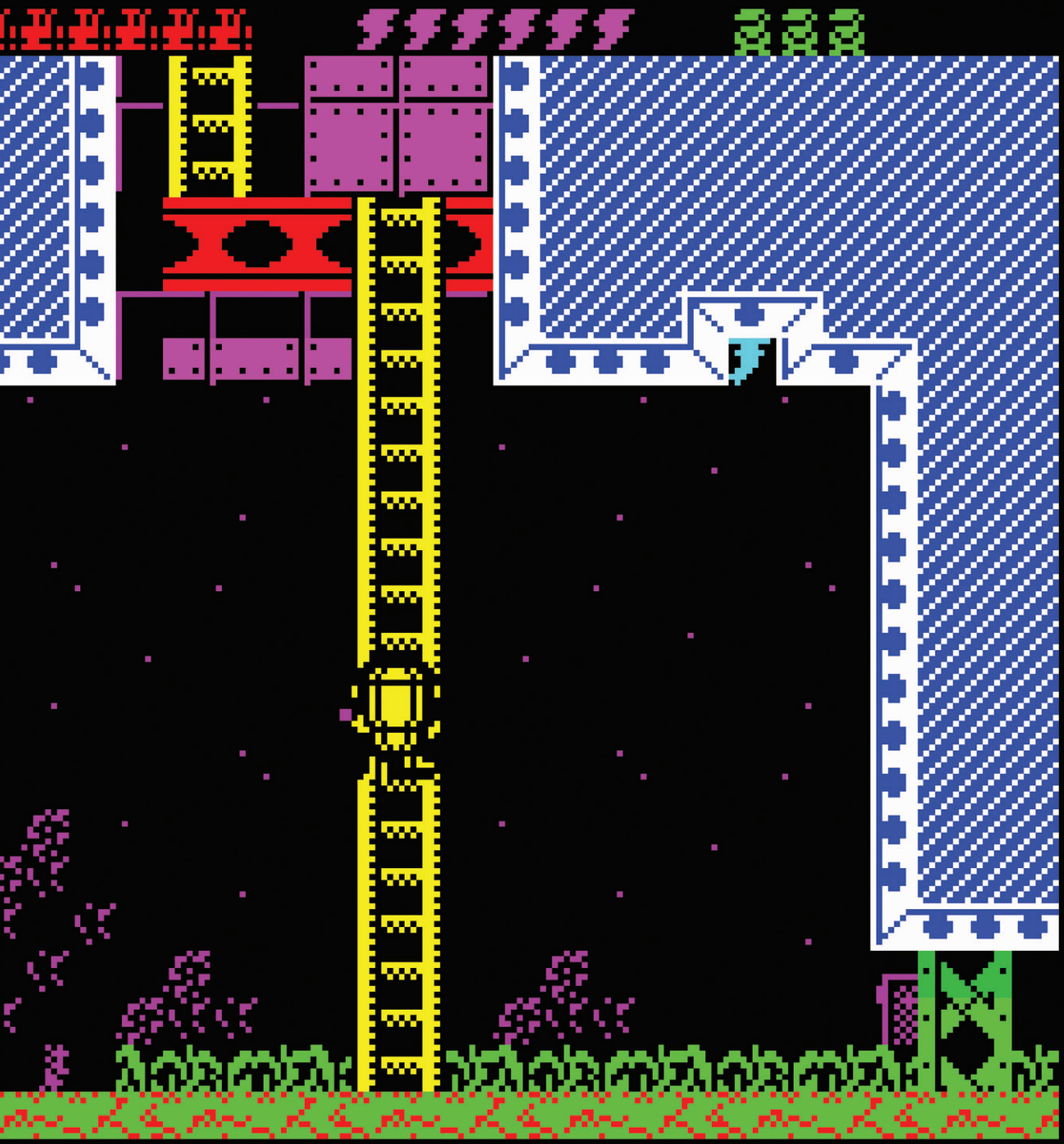
Name	:	Rick Dangerous 2
Year	:	1990
Publisher	:	Micro Style
Author	:	Terry Lloyd







The *Rick Dangerous* games have always attracted ire for their difficulty level, in particular the many traps which often led to instant death. That criticism clearly comes from the 16-bit crowd, as Spectrum owners are clearly made of stronger stuff. Hell, we grew up on games where we died repeatedly until we learnt how not to. And by God we were better gamers for it. Or maybe that was just me. Anyway, the second Rick game on the Spectrum is a quality platformer that will indeed confound and frustrate but it never becomes so annoying that you want to throw in the towel. Like the original game, some of the levels are truncated compared to the 16-bit versions, but there are still tons of devious screens to negotiate. It looks absolutely lovely too, with well-defined graphics and an abundance of colour bringing to life the Flash Gordon inspired story. Tiny factoid: this would be Core Design's last Spectrum game before it went off and found even greater success on more advanced platforms.



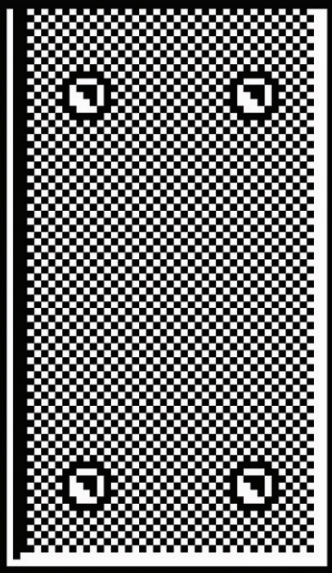




1. SINCLAIR JOYSTICK
2. KEMPSTON JOYSTICK
3. CURSOR JOYSTICK
4. KEYBOARD
5. DEFINE KEYS
0. START GAME

Name	:	Night Shift
Year	:	1991
Publisher	:	US Gold
Author	:	John Mullins, Jonathan P. Dean

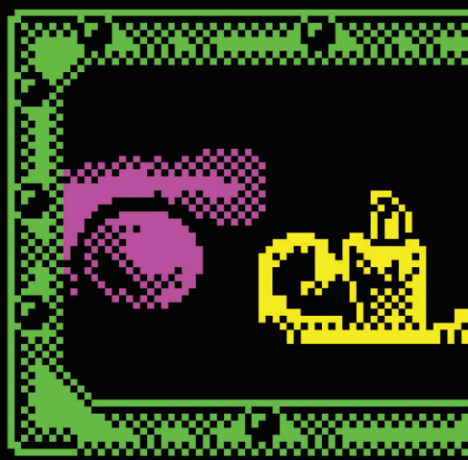




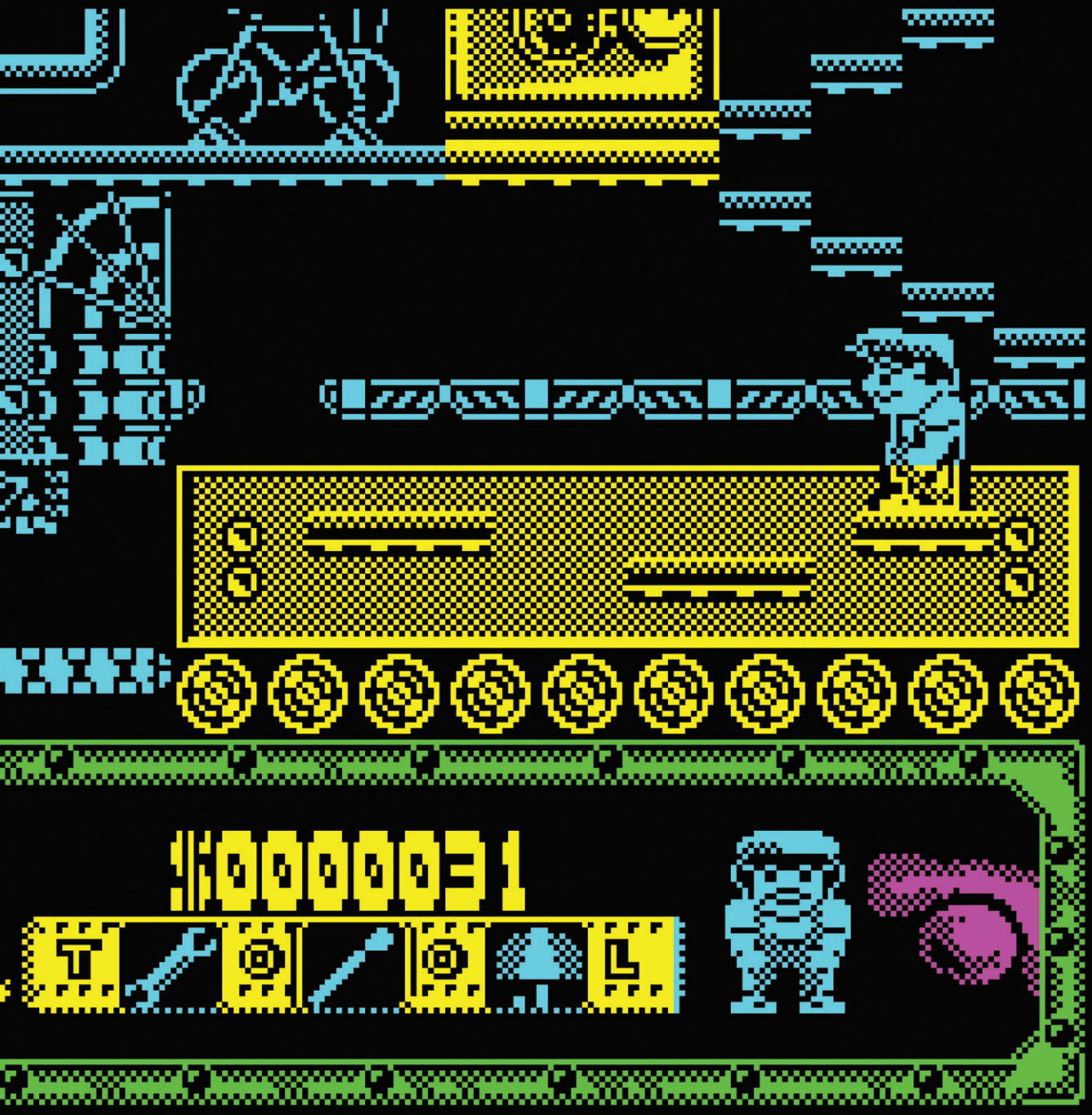




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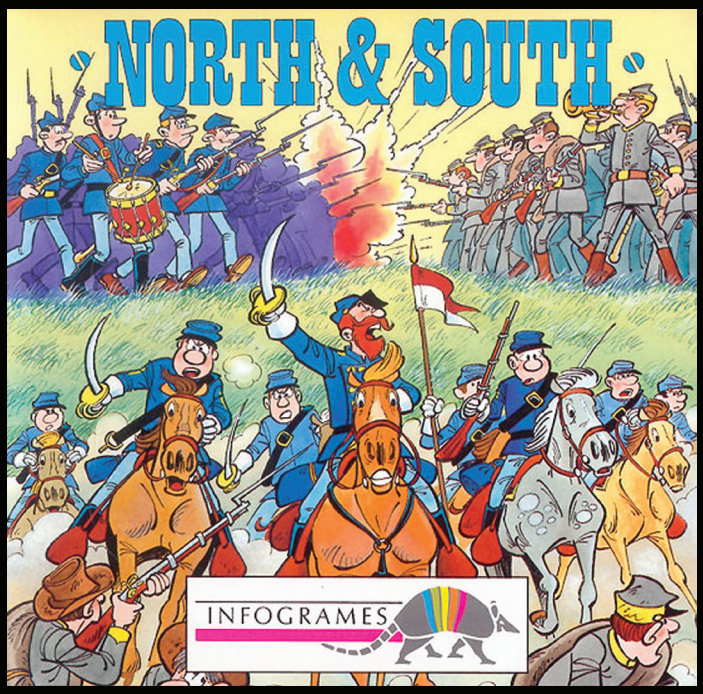


Choose from Fred or Fiona Fixit and attempt to keep a huge machine called the 'Beast' going overnight. The machine in question makes LucasFilm action figures (you know, Star Wars, Indiana Jones etc.) and because the demand for such toys is so great they can't afford the machine to stop running. Maintaining a machine like this is no easy task and there are plenty of things to do. Powering up the Beast involves getting on a bike and pedalling and only once the juice is flowing can you start using the platforms to get to the various parts of the machine and fix the inevitable problems. These include things like loose screws, broken lights, paint mixing and faulty power sockets. Your tool box can be filled with useful items you happen upon, such as spanners and matches which you then use to help you in your tasks. The amount of toys you need to make to keep the boss happy increases with each shift worked and things get hectic very quickly. A great looking, very original, albeit frustrating game with great sound effects and a quirky opening tune from Dave Lowe AKA Uncle Art.





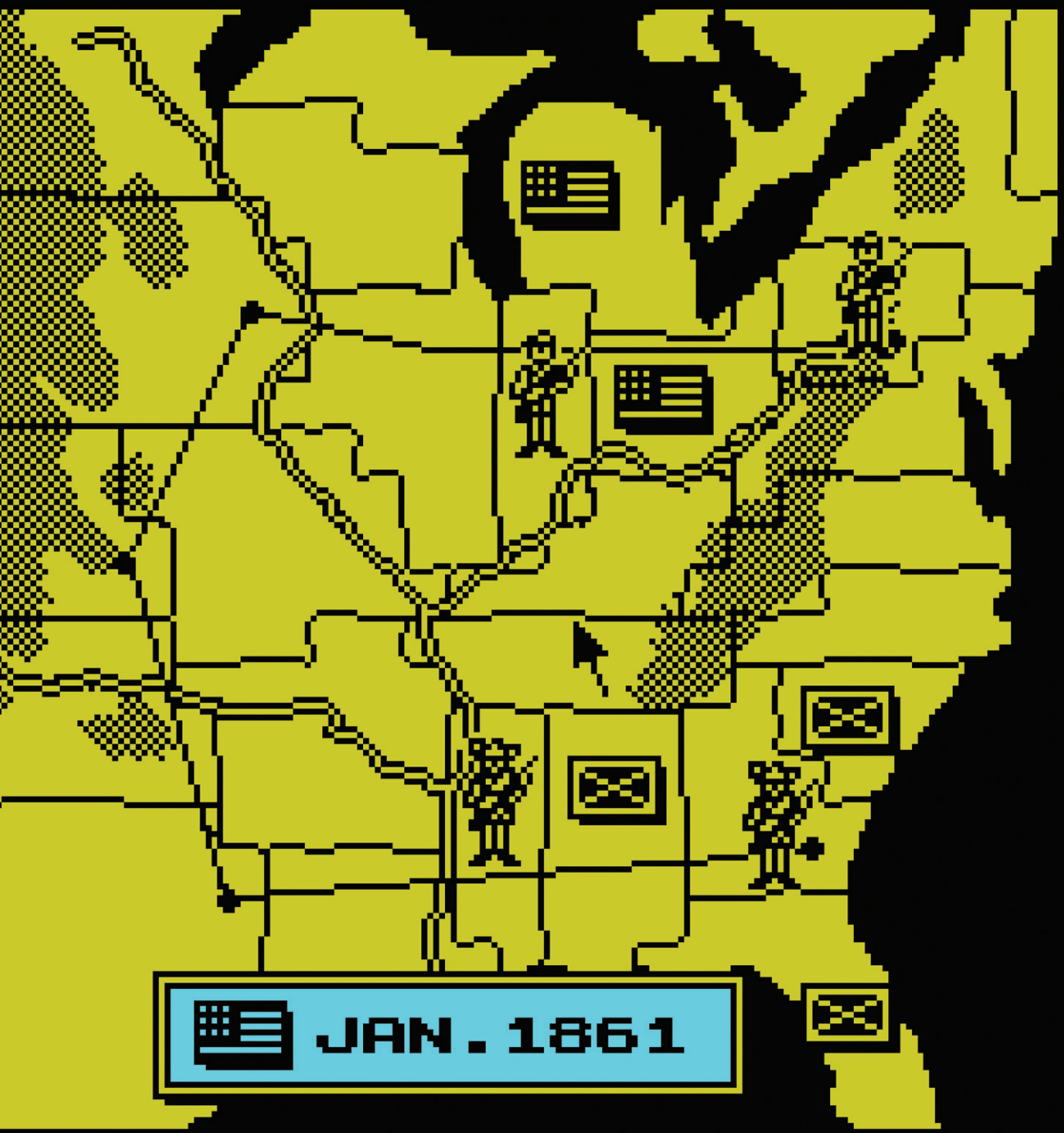
Name	:	North & South
Year	:	1991
Publisher	:	Infogrames
Author	:	Zydro, Dabyd, Daniel Diaz, Fustor, McAlby, Robin





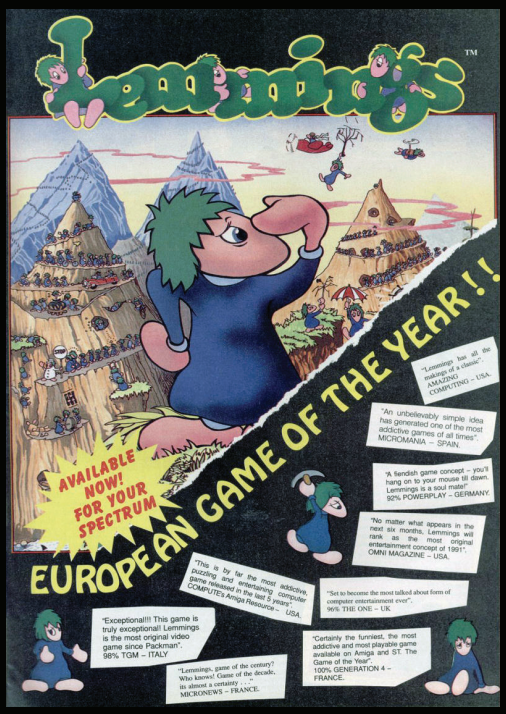


A number of celebrated 16-bit hits were squeezed onto the Spectrum and the results were generally good, with titles like *Carrier Command*, *Shadow of the Beast* and *Lemmings* showing that the aging 8-bit micro could still handle the biggest new releases. *North and South* can be added to the list, but with one crucial caveat – only on disk for the Spectrum +3. This is because the game – which is probably the least po-faced strategy title ever created – sees you jumping between various scenarios as you attempt to outmanoeuvre your opponent. On cassette this requires much multi-loading and juggling of cassettes, so having everything spun directly off disk is the only practical way to enjoy *North and South*. And as an added bonus, the disk version includes an extra scenario (the train robbery) which is not included on the standard tape version. This is one of a small number of games that +3 devotees can treasure, as on disk there is very little difference between this and the 16-bit version.





Name	:	Lemmings
Year	:	1991
Publisher	:	Psygnosis
Author	:	Jonathan Dye, Gary Timmons, Scott G. Johnston





(C) MCMXI PSYGNOSIS LTD

A DMA DESIGN GAME

PRESS SPACE TO BEGIN

LEMMINGS BY DMA DESIGN

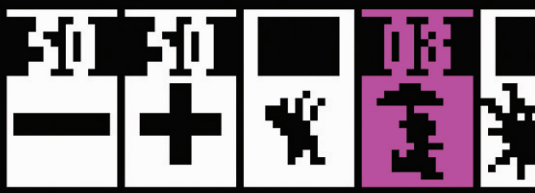
OPTIONS PAGE

› KEYBOARD
KEMPSTON JOYSTICK

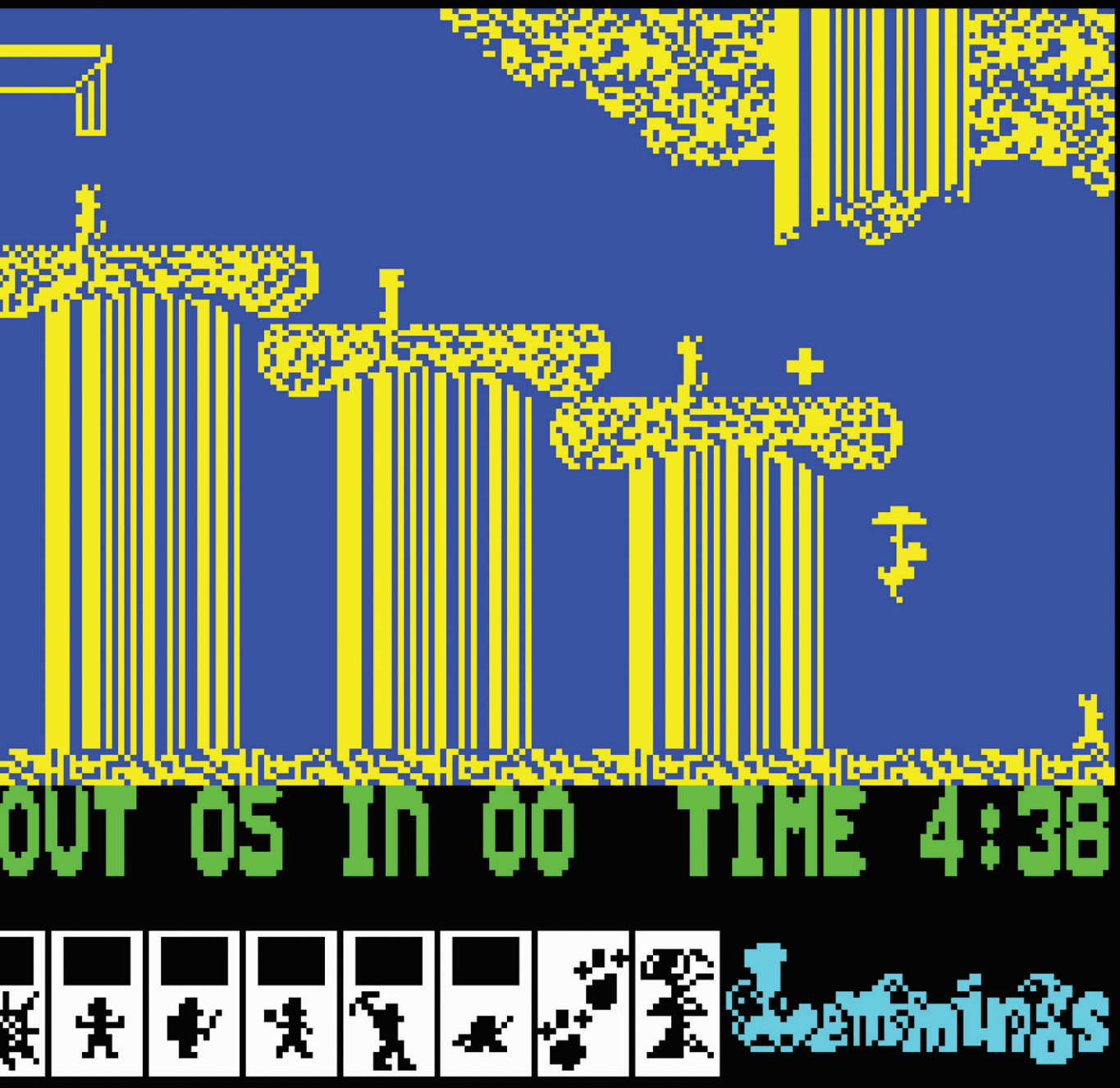
ENTER TO TOGGLE OPTIONS

PRESS SPACE TO CONTINUE





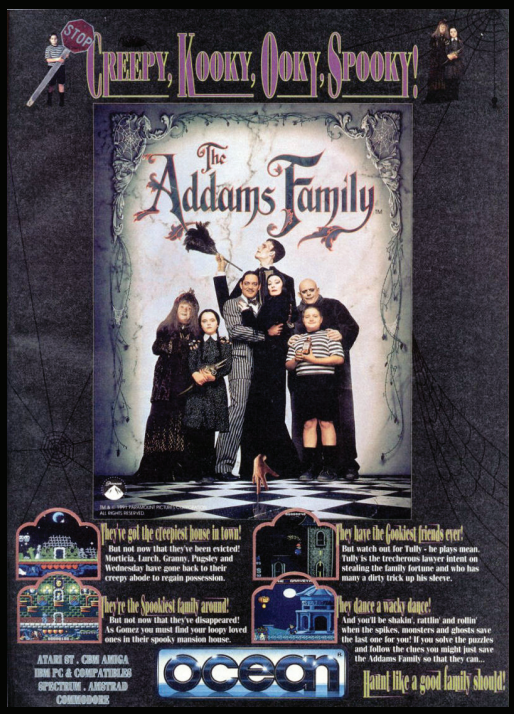
Lemmings on the Spectrum? "Impossible!", they must have cried. Well actually DMA Design (later becoming Rockstar North) managed to shoehorn this hugely celebrated game into 48k on a humble 10 year old 8-bit micro. Of course there were sacrifices to be made. Speed for one; there is some serious slowdown when the action gets frantic. Colour has been forfeited too. With characters as small as these on screen, the Spectrum with its attribute clash, was never going to be up to the task. Lemmings has 60 levels, 15 levels per difficulty level which makes for a game with plenty of longevity and variety. In-game sound effects are non-existent although the one tune that does play in the background is luckily pretty hummable. Unfortunately because all of the Lemmings are the same colour, they can become indiscernable when in a group, making gameplay tricky at times. With all that said this is a stunning conversion with graphics, that despite the limitations of the hardware in question, work surprisingly well. Albeit in a two-colour sort of way.

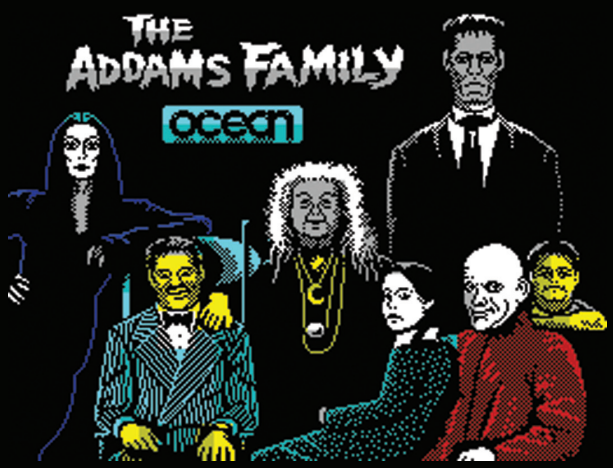


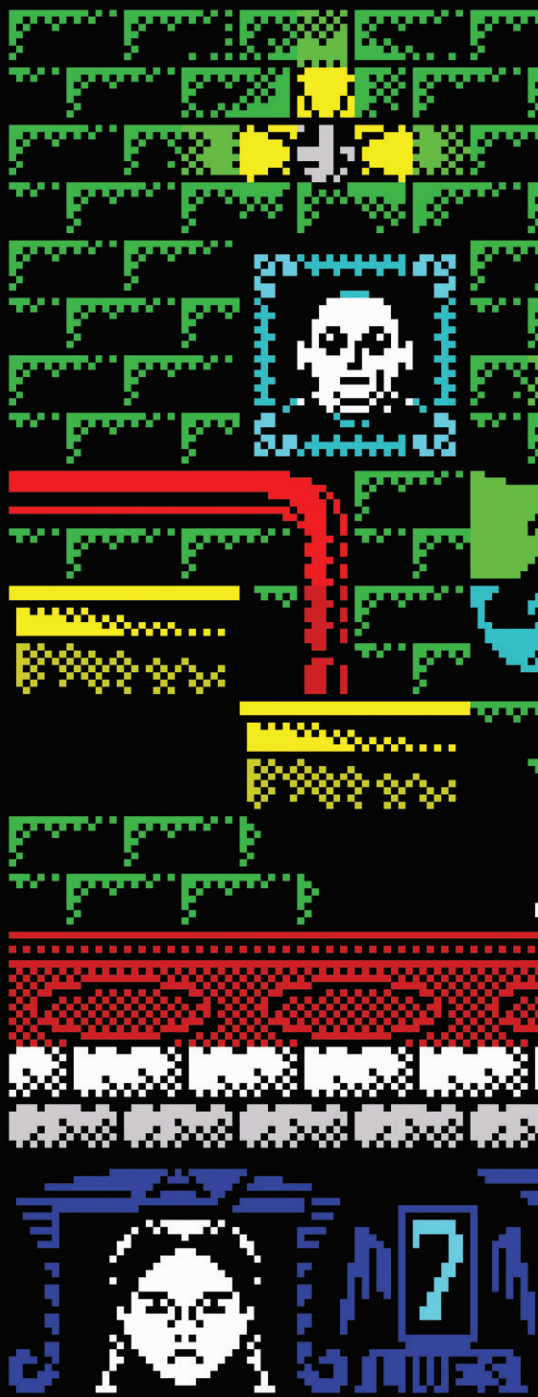


(C) 1991 PARAMOUNT PICS / OCEAN.

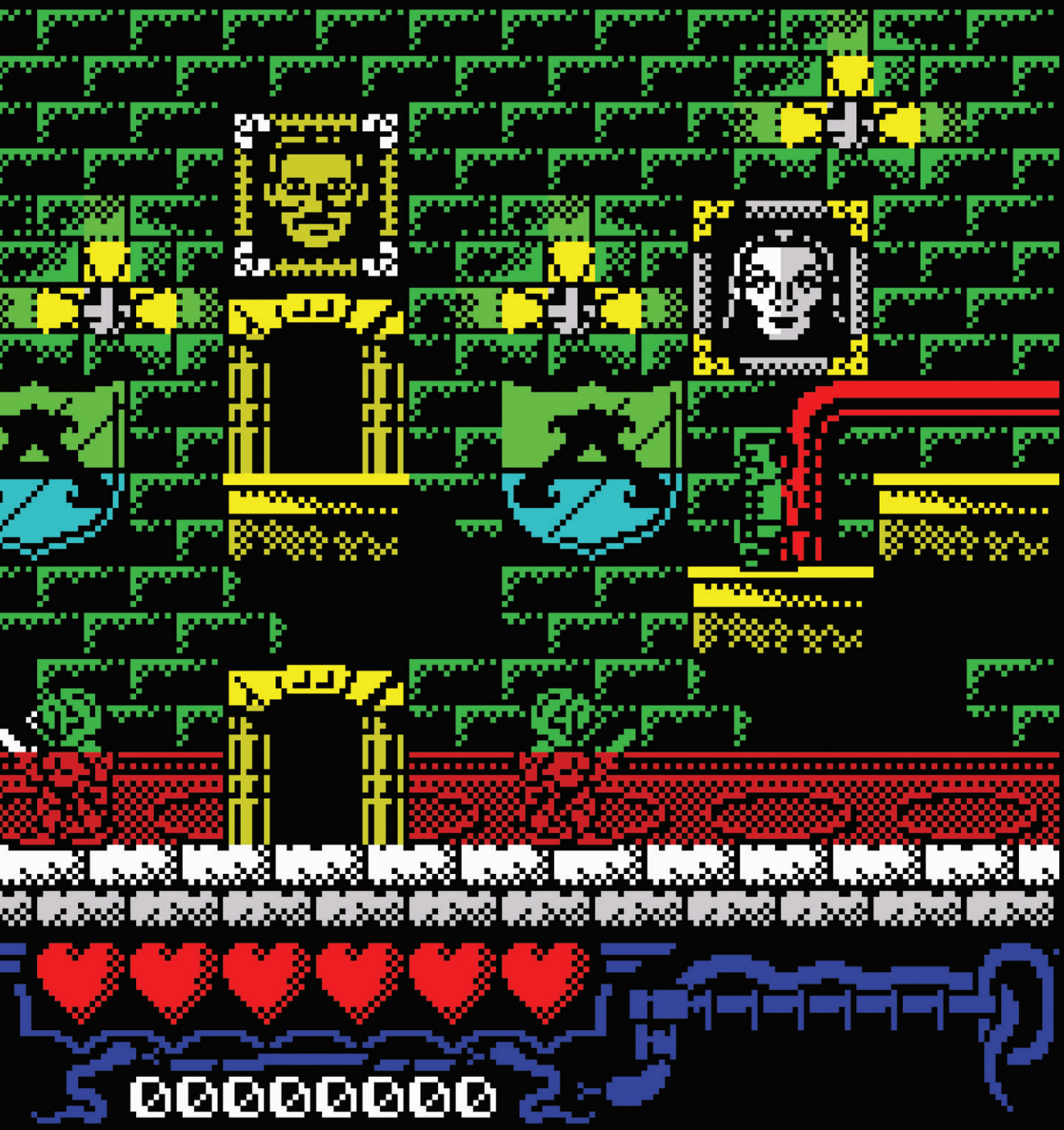
Name	:	The Addams Family
Year	:	1992
Publisher	:	Ocean Software
Author	:	Andrew P. Deakin, Ivan Horn, Jonathan Dunn



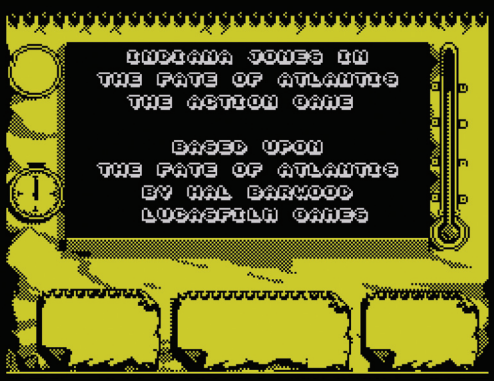




Movie tie-ins are sometimes, no - often disappointing. So imagine everyone's surprise when Ocean released this particular gem which is so much at odds with what we have come to expect. What it is in fact, is a smoothly animated arcade platformer with large, well animated characters and enemies, bestowed with beautifully drawn screens that make the very best of the Spectrum's limited colour palette. The game is a huge exploration-fest, as Gomez, you are tasked with finding the rest of the Addams family who are hiding away in your vast mansion, from the bailiffs sent to evict them. And vast it certainly is, with 240 screens of baddie-laden residence to investigate. Once a relative has been tracked down you are sent to a new screen where you will have to survive for a minute. If you endure, cross another family member off the list. Topping it all off are some outstanding AY tunes by Jonathan Dunn making this game the complete 128K package.







Name : Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis

Year : 1992

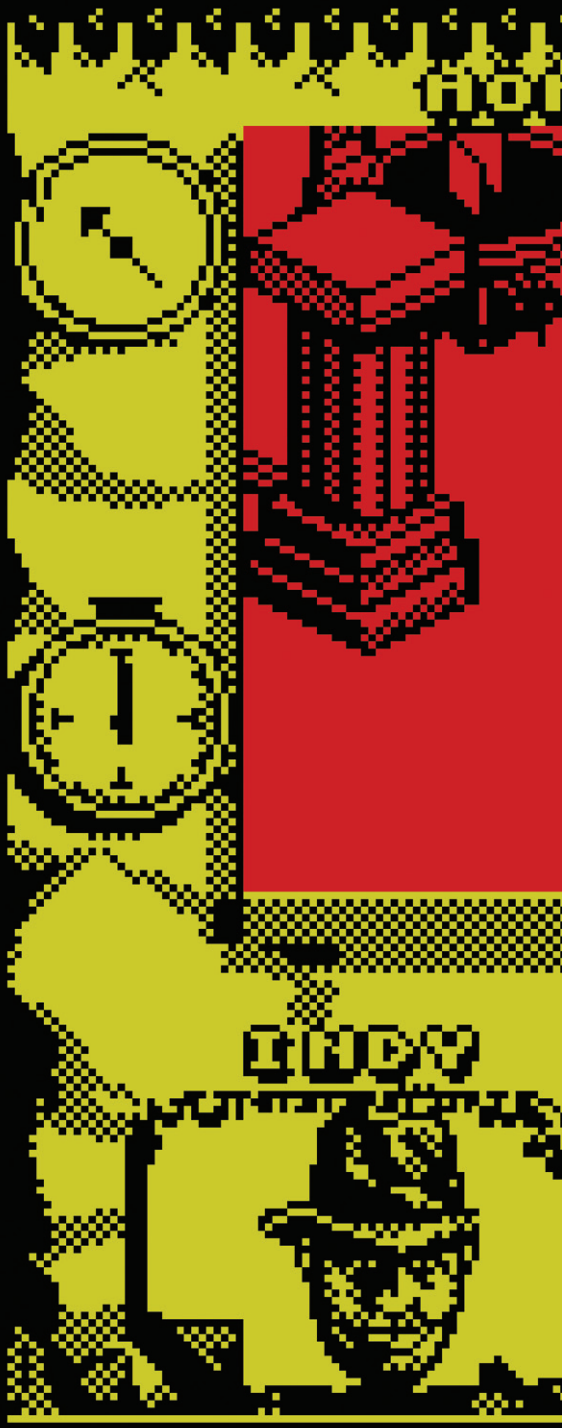
Publisher : US Gold

Author : Jonathan Court , Nick Cooke

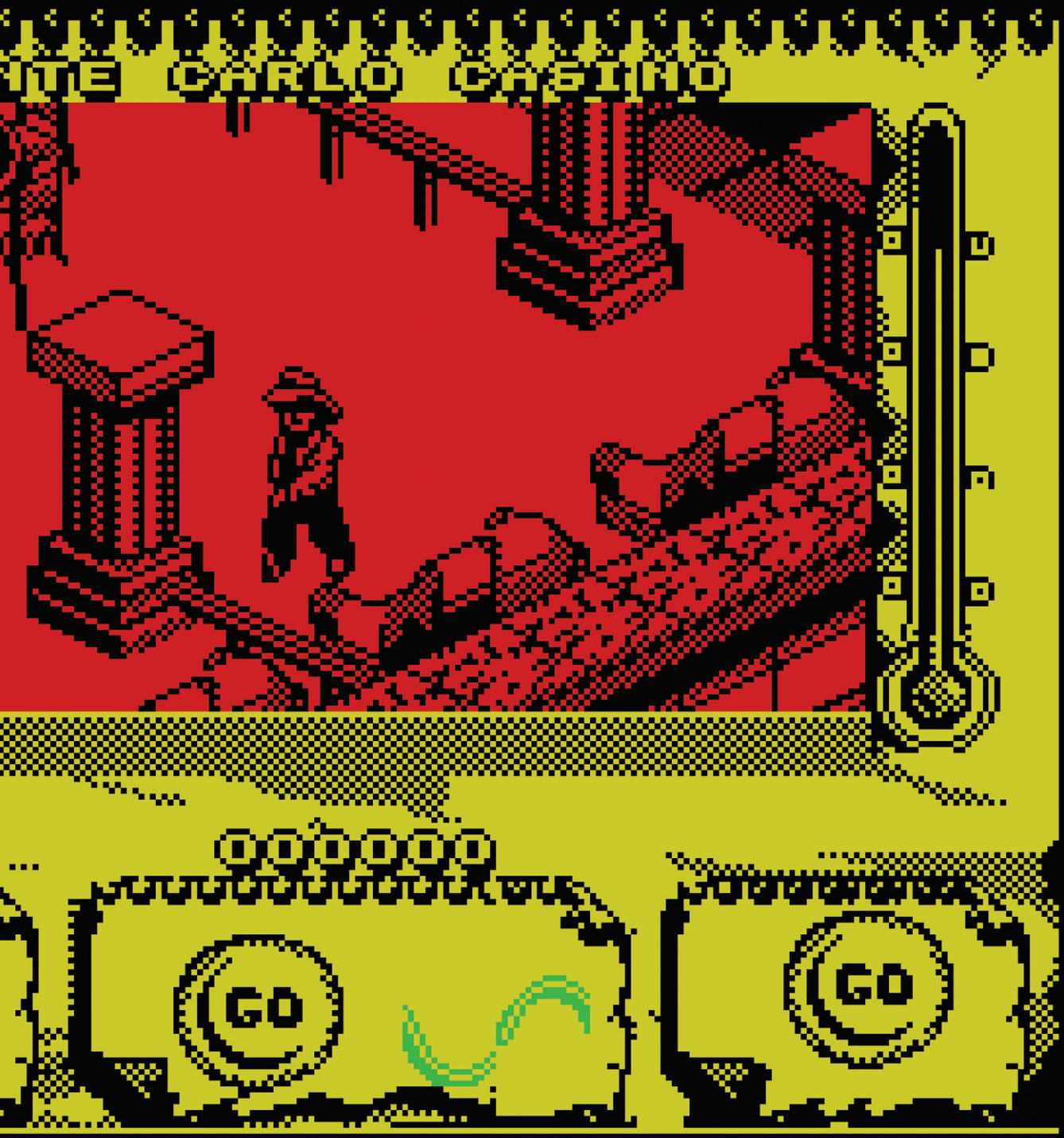
C. Green, Karen Trueman



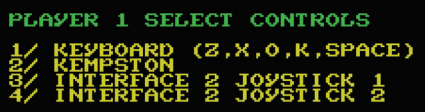




Originally a point and click PC game, this not surprisingly transformed into a pretty standard isometric 3D explore 'em up in its transition to the Spectrum. You can switch between playing as Indy or Sophia during the game which principally consists of solving puzzles and killing Nazis. The object of the game being to stop the Nazis utilising the powers of the fabled Atlantis for their own dastardly ends. You will roam through 6 areas; Casino, Naval Base, Submarine Dock, Submarine, Islands and finally Atlantis itself. The actual gameplay area feels quite small and the pace of play feels a little sluggish but the characters are large and well drawn and the maps full of detail and interest. Combat is a bit hit and miss with Nazis appearing from nowhere and you seem to succumb to their blows all too easily. On a more pragmatic note, you never die, just get captured and it is up to your other playable character to then rescue you from internment.

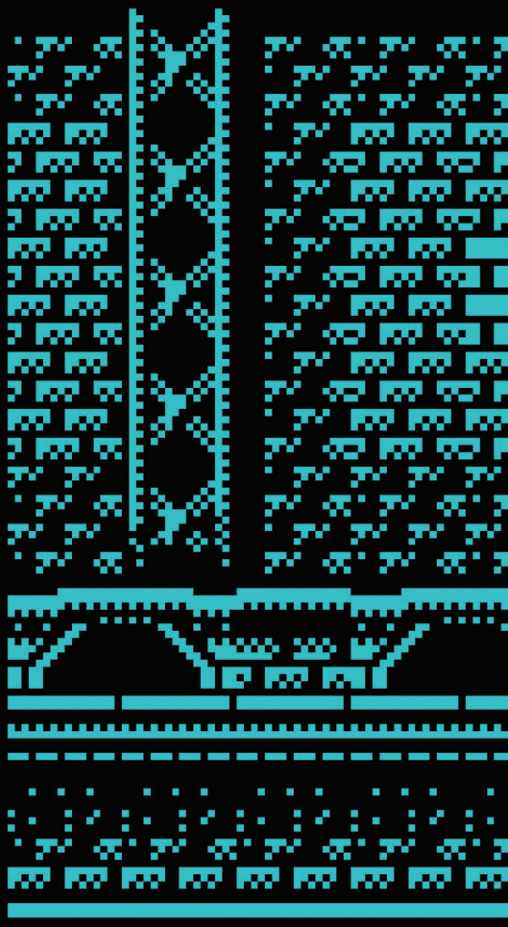




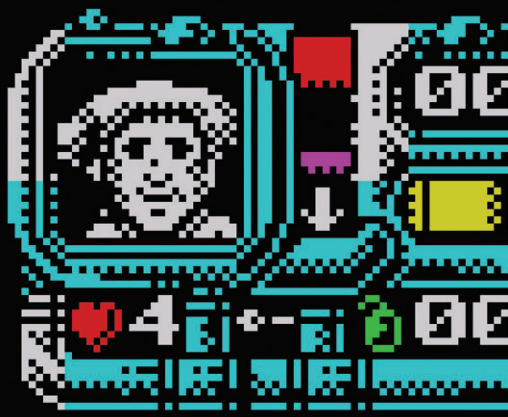


Name	:	Dalek Attack
Year	:	1992
Publisher	:	Admiral Software
Author	:	Nicholas Kimberley

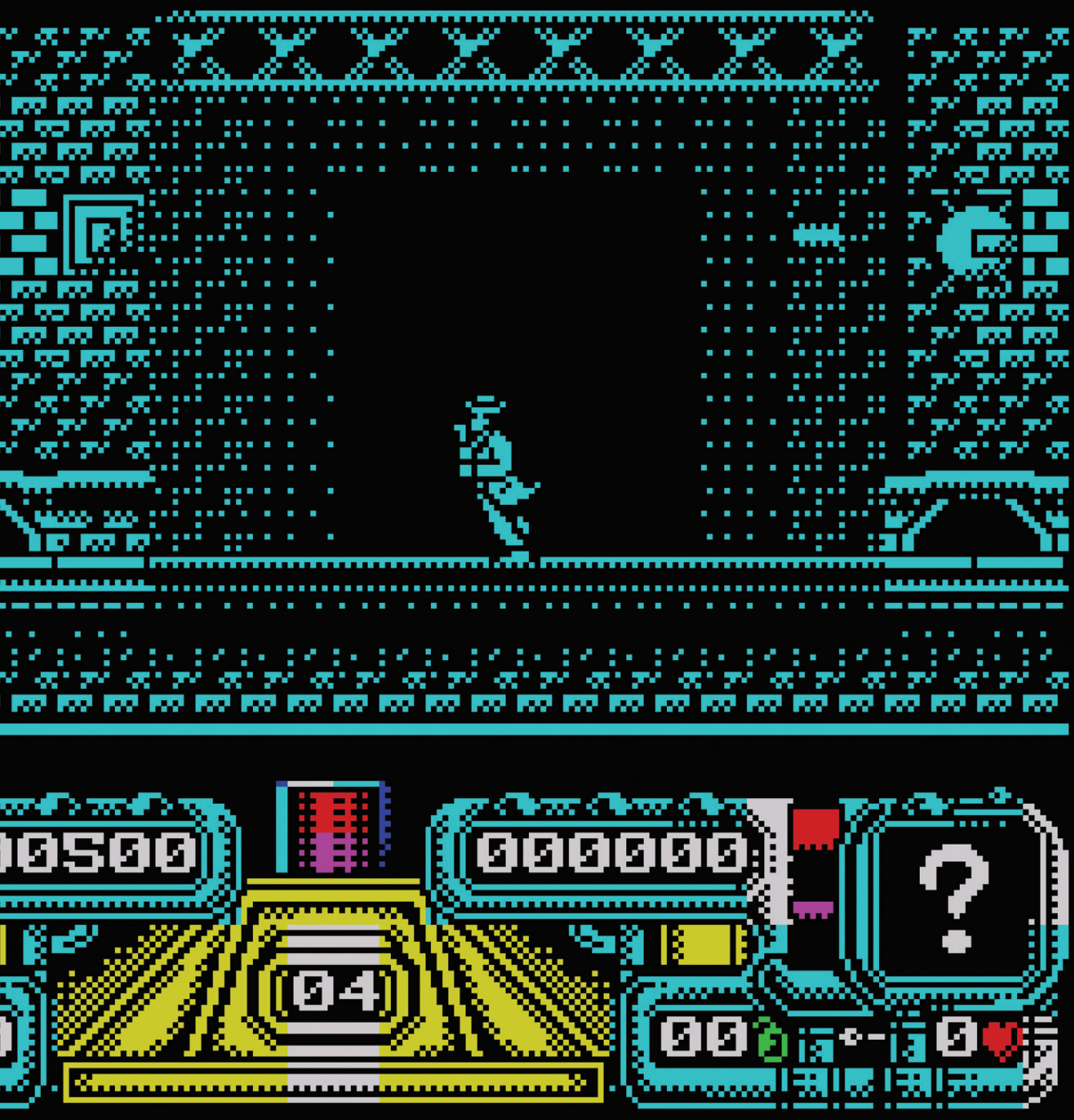








This was the last licensed game to be released, at a time when the Spectrum was no longer recognised as a viable platform. Luckily Admiral made the game anyway, due to interest shown by the community. Unfortunately the Spectrum game differed massively from versions on other platforms; one Doctor (the Seventh) instead of a choice of three on other platforms; only Ace available instead of the option of Ace or a UNIT soldier and no hover board on the first level. Whovians were to be disappointed too as the game features a Timelord that runs and guns his way around levels Rambo-style - not very Doctor-like at all. On a plus side, the game is fast. Blisteringly fast for a Spectrum game actually and if you forget it's supposed to be rooted in the world of Dr Who its not a bad effort at all. Gameplay is a pretty standard fare - infiltrate the force fields that surround four of Earth's cities (London, Paris, Tokyo and New York), beat the baddies whilst rescuing hostages along the way whilst collecting powerups as you go - and then the final boss. Beat them all and you get the pleasure of facing off with Davros himself.





The alien landscape cover of Issue 88 of Crash magazine by Oliver Frey.

THE MEMOIRS



Dawn Drake

Best known for her games whilst at Ocean, Dawn started het career at Canvas where she was interviewed by Simon Butler - another name synonymous with Ocean Software. She got the job!

My humble beginnings begin with a big thank you to Simon Butler who employed me as computer artist at Canvas Software back in the 80's. I had originally applied for board game artist but they had scrapped that idea by the time I was interviewed. Apparently Steve Cain and Simon Butler were impressed by my work, but Ian Weatherburn needed convincing. Nevertheless - I was hired!

I had never touched a computer (for gaming) until then, I was a graphic artist and used other equipment, so I had a very steep learning curve to get over and work as fast as I could as deadlines were always tight. At first, I had to work on the Spectrum and Amstrad. The horror of drawing in pixels, attributes and colour clashing gave me nightmares at first. But I eventually became more comfortable with the challenges of the Spectrum. I remember looking at other Spectrum games, such as *Prince of Persia*, wanting to achieve the detailing they had done.



Dawn's Ocean Software ID card.

At Canvas, I worked on Spectrum games such as *Road Runner*, *Charlie Chaplin*, *Wizard Warz* and *Super Cycle*. When Canvas was winding down I had heard Ocean was recruiting so I jumped ship to Ocean Software, interviewed by Gary Bracey and Steve Wahid.

There I took over *Target Renegade* on the Spectrum with Mike Lamb as programmer, as the previous artist 'Ronnie', had left to join the army. I still felt relatively new to the gaming industry and had to really pull my socks up. Gary Bracey and Lorraine Starr were brilliant at putting me at ease. It helped that I knew a few of the lads anyway and that the working environment was more 'family' orientated and felt I

was quickly accepted. I worked on the Spectrum ZX Microdrive and +3, the latter being better for working on the keyboard. At Ocean we used a bit-map Editor for the artwork.

After the success of *Target Renegade*, Mike and I were asked to work on *Robocop*. I was quite proud of it achieving such success – 18 weeks at number one. Mike was an absolute Godsend for being as patient as a saint! Although I remember we did have some volcanic rows over what art work could/could not go in but we got there in the end. It was great having to try and incorporate sections from the film into a game. I particularly liked adding the photo fit and the lining up of the target in the hostage situation.

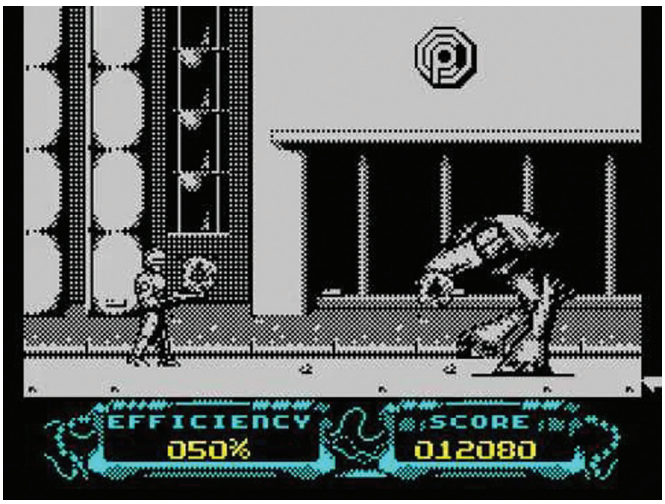
I also worked with Mike Lamb on *Batman: The Movie* on the Spectrum, which had a tight deadline and felt that the graphics suffered because of it. Although we were flown to New York to see the film as we missed the premiere. We must have watched it a fair few times and took notes etc without trying to look suspicious to other movie-goers. Jurassic Park was another movie title that I worked on where the team, actually the whole development team, went to see it and take on board the story prior to storyboarding and selecting gameplay scenarios.



Target: Renegade - Dawn produced the graphics for the game with Mike Lamb coding the engine.

Artwork for the Gameboy was also very similar to that of the Spectrum. I had the pleasure of working on titles such as *Desert Strike*, *Robocop*, *Darkman* and later on *The Simpsons* and *The Rugrats*, various titles.

I will always associate working on the Spectrum with fond memories from the Ocean days and working with the many fantastic people – especially the late Martin Holland, at Canvas Software and later at Software Creationsfi



Robocop - one of Ocean's biggest hits - Dawn and Mike worked together once again to produce this great movie conversion.

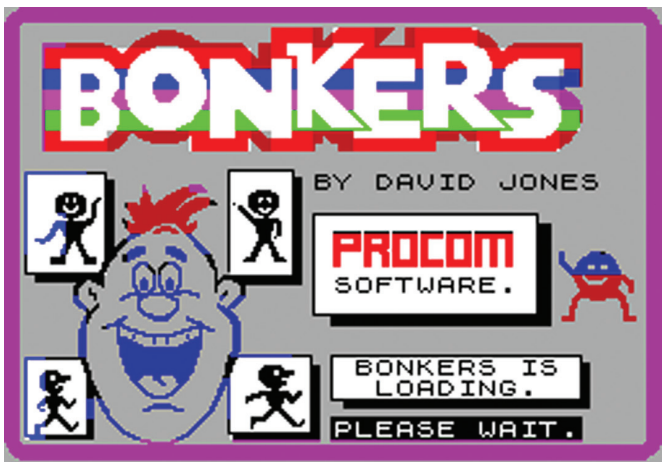


David Jones

The *Magic Knight* games developed by David are synonymous with quality and every Spectrum gamer has bumped into one, if not all, of the titles that make up this classic series.

I was working as a trainee quantity surveyor when in 1979, I bought my first computer, a Video Genie, which was a clone of the TRS-80. On the plus side, it was cheaper than a TRS-80 and had a built in tape deck, on the minus side, presumably to avoid them being sued as a 100% copy of the TRS-80, it didn't have lowercase characters. 'a' and 'A' would both appear on screen as 'A'. But that didn't matter to me and I spent many happy hours entering listings from magazines and then debugging them due to misprints and mistypes. But after a month of that I set about writing my own game and proudly took it to my local computer shop to show off and got the response, "Not bad, but you need machine code for that". A month later I'd worked out how to do that, but it's hard to finish writing a game in machine code when you have a full time job and there's hardly anybody else with a computer who will buy it, so I just went back into hobby mode for a bit, but my friends all knew that I knew more about computers than they did.

Then when the ZX Spectrum came out a friend brought one round to show me. I was impressed! It had ten times the number of pixels than a TRS-80 and COLOUR! I knew I could do something with that, but I didn't want to mess about with the silly rubber keyboard and by this time I'd upgraded to a TRS-80 model III with floppy disk drives, so I wasn't interested in using tapes either and as a result I didn't immediately start writing for it.



Bonkers - David's first contribution to the ZX Spectrum.

Then some time later I heard through the grapevine of people I knew from local computer shops that there

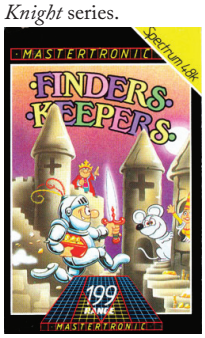
was a man looking for programmers and his details were passed to me. This turned out to be Albert Owen and he was looking to get a games business going. I went to meet him and when he found out that I had a TRS-80 he sourced a useful interface for me from John Campbell of Campbell Systems, another programmer who he knew, and I was ready to start developing for the Spectrum.

Albert's son Ray was ready and willing to create the graphics and Albert came up with our initial game idea, a game called *Bonkers*. I can't exactly remember how Albert described it now, but he enthusiastically described something very much in the arcade genre and I wrote a game that we were all happy with that involved floors and lifts and chasing enemies. In retrospect, it's a bit frogger-like, but I didn't intend it to be.

Once that was finished, Albert came up with the initial concept of *Magic Knight*. It was novel in that most games were set in the future and here was a middle ages Knight for a change. I took inspiration from *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy*, but I decided to add a couple of mazes so that nobody could claim I'd just ripped those games.



Finder's Keepers - The first of three games in the *Magic Knight* series.

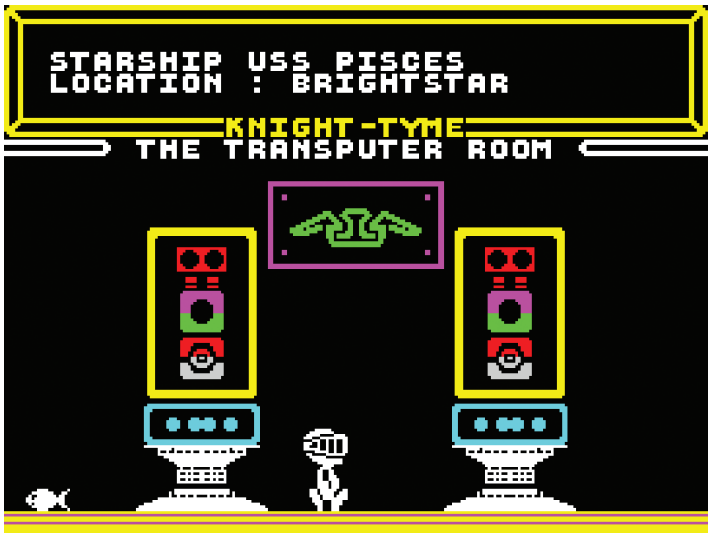


While I was writing *Magic Knight* (which was eventually called *Finders Keepers*), Albert was trying to sell *Bonkers*, but not really getting very far, so as *Magic Knight* approached completion we took it to Mastertronic. They suggested a few changes, mostly to do with having money values to the various objects so that there would be an 'educational' aspect to the game as that was an area they wanted to expand into at that time.



Spellbound - released in 1985 with versions for the 48K and 128K ZX Spectrum.

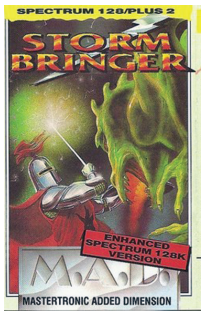
When *Magic Knight* was completed they suggested calling it *Finders Keepers* because, as they said "You find



Knight-Tyme - released first on the 128K Spectrum, with a cut down 48K version subsequently.

things and you keep them", but it was really because Mastertronic never liked spending any money on advertising and there was a film due out called *Finders Keepers*. They hoped that if that film was popular there would be people buying the game because they thought there was a connection with it. I delivered the game to them in October 1984, but they kept it back for a January 1985 release so that it would have a whole year of sales to give it a better chance of placing well in the 'best sellers of the year' chart for 1985 rather than just having a few months in the 1984 chart. I believe it ended up as number five overall for the year which was quite nice.

After *Finders Keepers* I spent a few months wondering what to do next and then I saw an Apple Mac for a few minutes which gave me the idea of how to do a windowed system to build up a command structure for a proper graphic adventure. This became *Spellbound* and again Ray did the graphics.



Stormbringer - the last outing in the classic series.

Knight-Tyme followed and shortly after I started writing it I was given a pre-production 128K Spectrum, so I decided to make the game as a 128K version first and then worry about how much I could fit into 48K afterwards. This meant that *Knight-Tyme* was the only original 128K game available when the 128K Spectrum was launched. There were other 128K games, but they were largely enhanced 48K versions, in some cases, exactly the same as the 48K versions, but with added sound.

After *Knight-Tyme*, the main person I dealt with at Mastertronic, John Maxwell, left and the company started to change a lot. It wasn't as much fun dealing with them so I finished with *Magic Knight* with *Stormbringer*.

Since then I've worked for a variety of games companies and been self employed doing a bunch of different jobs and running various businesses, but one day I'd like to get back to writing my own games again.

I have a bunch of new *Magic Knight* adventures ready to go and lots of other games I'd like to write.



Introduction

One thing's certain about the Sinclair world – there's never a dull moment.

Every month sees new software and new hardware, produced by Sinclair enthusiasts, or produced by Sinclair itself.

The magazines do a fantastic job of keeping you up to date with the input of enthusiasts. We want to keep you in touch with Sinclair's own developments.

Every month, there'll be a Sinclair Special in this magazine.

Sometimes, inevitably, there won't be anything new to say – we want to break away from the breathless announcements of hardware and software you just can't buy.

But when something new *is* available, we want you to have accurate information – fast. You'll find it here.

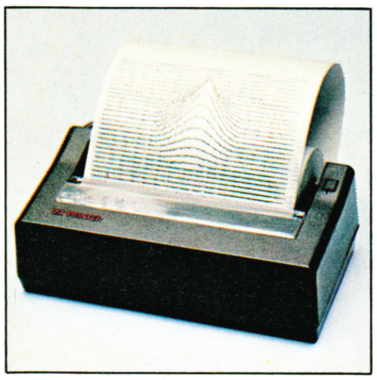
This month, we're giving you the latest information on the recommended retail prices of Sinclair equipment. They're *our* prices, and you may well find things cheaper (or dearer) in the shops. If they're cheaper – terrific! Snap them up. Note, however, that from us the ZX81 is down to £39.95.

We're also announcing six superb new Sinclair cassettes for the Spectrum, and three more which make full use of the ZX81. There's an order form at the back of this Special.

Next month . . . but there, next month is another story! Watch (as they say) this space.

Nigel Searle

Nigel Searle.
Managing Director,
Sinclair Research Ltd.



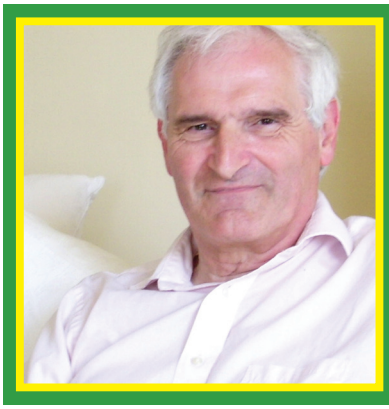
Spectrum – latest recommended retail prices.



16K was £125.00
16K now £99.95

48K was £175.00
48K now £129.95

ZX Printer was £59.95 — ZX Printer now £39.95
ZX81 was £49.95 — ZX81 now £39.95

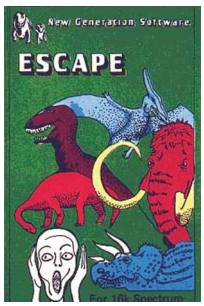


Malcolm Evans

New Generation Software were ahead of the curve developing 3D games on the humble ZX81 and ZX Spectrum. These titles proved hugely popular. *Trashman* was arguably Malcolm's finest hour.

My first encounter with a computer was a PDP8 – three, 6ft high racks of electronics with teletype output and paper tape reader input. It was used to test a satellite, which I helped to design. It was my first job after getting a Degree in Electrical Engineering. The only software I had written at University was in Fortran, by supplying the distant computer room with code and two days later receiving the results of the run. It was not a fast process. The satellite, Prospero, was the only payload to be launched on Britain's own rocket, Black Arrow. If I recall correctly, that rocket was the only one ever built never to fail, even during development. Yet the Government announced the scrapping of the project 3 days before the launch down in Woomera, Australia, in 1972. Not seeing beyond their wallets, the Government was selling Britain's technological silver, and handing over European Satellite launching to the French.

I don't think I had heard the name Clive Sinclair until I became involved in research on digital controllers for jet engines. I had designed a novel analogue to digital converter. When I was at Ferranti to initiate the fabrication of the chip, I saw two large photographs on the wall. The engineers told me one was of the surface of the Ferranti F100 microprocessor we were using, and the other was for Clive Sinclair and that it would revolutionise computing. I dismissed the idea. I believe this was the very end of the



Escape, published by New Generation Software in 1982.



70s.

I was a hardware man, frustrated by not being able to break into software because, as one person put it, I was too old, at 36. It was a young man's game. But what did he know, he was only a professional careers adviser.

My wife gave me a ZX81 for my birthday. Now was my chance. But I needed a project. Within days, I had brought the Z80 handbook and begun writing in assembler. I designed an algorithm for producing mazes. Then thought what would it be like in 3D? So wrote a program to present the maze that way. That was the beginning of *3D Monster Maze*. It was 25 years later when approached by a reporter that I discovered it had been the world's first 3D game. I was still learning the capabilities of the ZX81.

After the game was completed, I showed it to John Greye for the first time, and we decided to go into partnership to market it along with the BASIC games he had written. My second game, *3D Defender*, was complete by the time the buyer for WH Smith saw them at a Microfair in London and invited us up to see him. I went up and agreed on a £100k+ deal. I also persuaded him to take F*ull-Screen Breakout* for the 1K ZX81 after I suggested a retail price of £2. "Mere pocket money", was his delighted response. Greye was not satisfied with either deal but it was his decision not to go. Perhaps, using the "£" symbol prominently in *Breakout* was a bit of a cheek on my part.

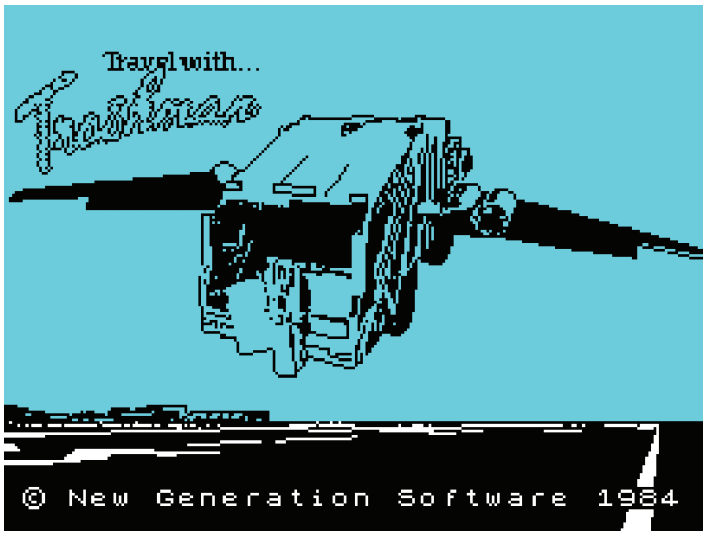


Knot in 3D, taking 3D to the next level on the Spectrum.

Two weeks before the meeting at Smiths I discovered I was to be made redundant; my then employer was to close down. This was the first of five redundancy situations I was to find myself in the shrinking aerospace industry. The



Trashman, making the mundane fun.



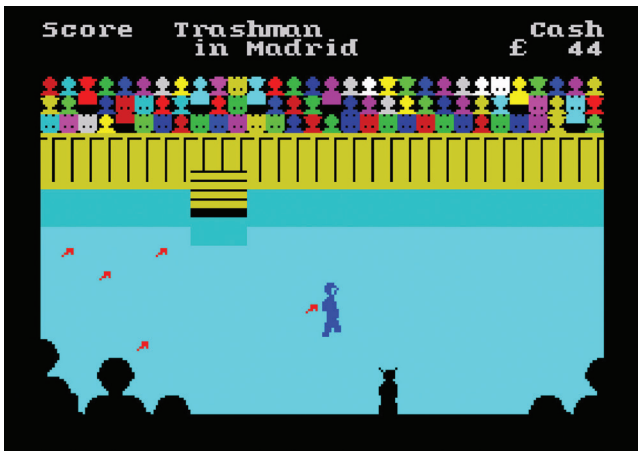
Travel with Trashman, time to clean up the world.

obvious solution to my dilemma was to take up writing computer games full time. However Greye's Bohemian lifestyle and obvious lack of effort for the partnership, leaving my wife and me to do all the work, soon led to our breakup. Never having had to pay tax before, Greye disappeared to Greece to ensure the government kept their hands off his half of the Smith's deal. Happy, even having paid more tax that year than I had earned in my life up till then, I set up New Generation Software, marketing my three ZX81 games.

The new New Generation games were for the Spectrum. Sadly its graphics, although of a higher resolution and in colour, were not as flexible as the ZX81. I had always synchronised the software to the screen to avoid flicker that came synonymous with those early games. The Spectrum only had the same processing power as the ZX81 with its simple, but flexible graphics. The screen was also not indirectly addressed. So large moving objects, as in *3D Monster Maze*, were not possible on the Spectrum. *Escape* was an early version using simple sprites. *Corridors of Genon* was another, simplifying the background to circular corridors, but increased tension as you hear Bogle approach while you desperately try to decipher the code to open the next door. But still Bogle could not engulf the full screen, other than with snot.

Knot in 3D used the colour pallette only, to achieve its graphics. Many gamers found *Knot* incomprehensible. But I found, if you played it either on a large screen or got close to it, the effect was real. You soon realised you were squirming your way through a 3D space trying to avoid others' trails. Once it absorbed you, you could move back and feel the ever increasing thrill of the game.

After those attempts at producing true 3D games, I reverted to perspective. The player no longer being 'in' the game. *Trashman* and *Travel with Trashman*



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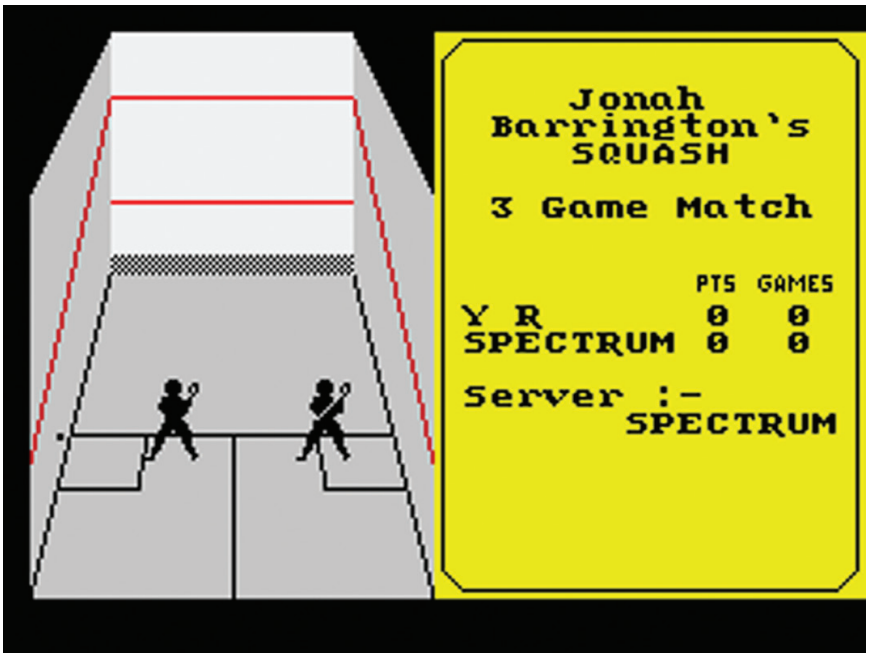
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were of this type, as was the adventure that was never finished or published.

It was my work on the A/D converter back in the 70s that gave me the idea for making the Spectrum talk in the game, *Jonah Barrington's Squash*. I built the converter and used the Spectrum to read, and store its output. The voice in the game was mine. One reviewer commented that he could not understand the code. It was not surprising. It was gibberish. It was the time it took to perform the instructions not what it did that was important. The stack was used to switch quickly between delay lists. The Z80 was not fast enough to perform delay loops to the required precision.

By the mid-80s, my company, New Generation Software, because of rising costs, had ceased writing games and had produced a portable computer, with a touchscreen. It allowed the user - in our first application, a kitchen designer - to select and draw using their finger or a pointer. An internal printer could then produce a 3D image of the designed installation, complete with its price. Perhaps it was luggable by today's standards and not portable. Sadly, it was before its time. It took too long to introduce it into kitchen retailers, and cash flow problems forced the company into liquidation.



Jonah Barrington's Squash - a nod and a wink to *Matchpoint* on the Spectrum.

Finding myself redundant for the second time, I returned to the Aerospace industry eventually returning to satellite work. Initially, I was back designing hardware, then writing test software as well, before finally writing satellite software itself. I wrote some for Beagle 2. Unfortunately, the spacecraft failed to deploy its solar panels on the surface of Mars and, therefore, could not utilise my image processing code. It would have been thrilling to see images from Mars. However, success finally arrived. I designed and wrote the Cryosat data handling software. Cryosat has been continually mapping the alarming reduction in the thickness of polar ice to an accuracy of millimetres, for the past 6 years, since I retired.

Not bad for someone too old to write software.



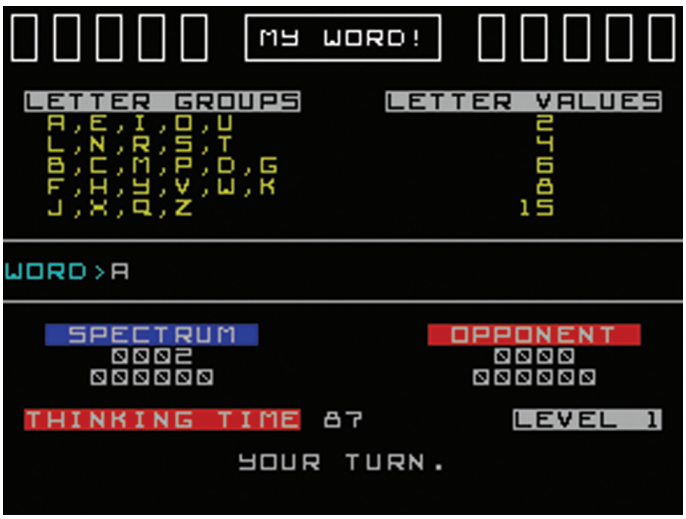
Shahid Ahmad

Inspired by the Filmation games by Ultimate Play The Game, Shahid developed the fondly remembered *Chimera* for the Spectrum.

I found computers boring at school. This is understandable when you realise that my first exposure to "interaction" was through punched cards containing CESIL code. CESIL was a truly brain dead version of BASIC. The debugging turn around time was a week and usually involved an arcane syntax error being flagged because of a single mistake on a single card.

My interest only marginally increased with the arrival of a black and white Research Machines computer. It did have BASIC, but it was shared by a lot of pupils, so you had to write your programs out by hand and hope you had time to enter them when your turn to use it came around.

I remember being interested by the limited block graphics and so I drew a design on graph paper and laboriously translated this into a series of plot statements. A fellow pupil looked at my masterpiece and scoffed. "That isn't programming!". I was crushed and my interest waned. I thought it was rather exciting that a series of written instructions (just a bunch of plot statements) could be transformed into a recognisable, custom image on a CRT, but he was right, it wasn't really programming.



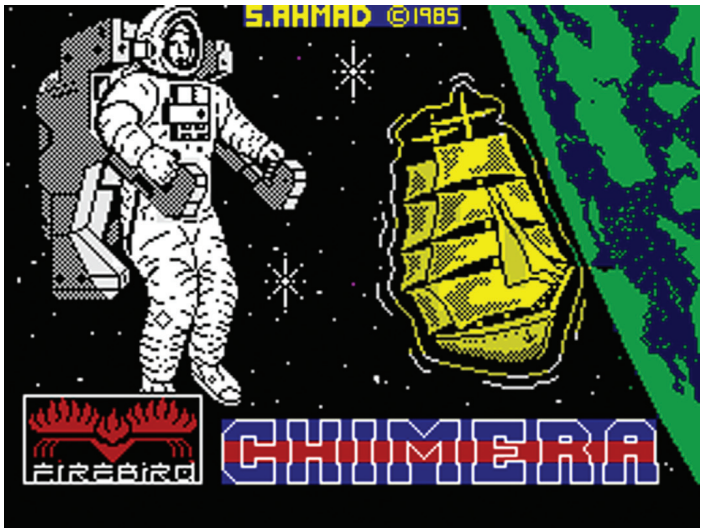
Shahid's first Spectrum effort - *My Word*.

Then, just before the school summer holidays of 1982, my friend Geoff Foley, already an expert programmer, gave me a leaflet for the forthcoming Sinclair ZX Spectrum. This ignited my

interest. This was a revolutionary home computing device with a colour screen, proper bitmapped display, enormous memory and a storage system (the Microdrive) that seemed even more like science fiction than the rest of the machine, and all for just £175 for the gigantic 48K version. I simply couldn't conceive how anyone would ever be able to fill that memory, it was beyond the dreams of avarice.

I spent much of that summer reading everything I could on home computing. Although the Spectrum had set me on a road that was to become not just my hobby, but the foundation of my working life, I settled on the Atari 400, clearly the most graphically impressive and powerful system of the time as the system I just had to have first. After weeks of cajoling, my mum took me to Red Lion House to ostensibly "have a look at one". All I knew is that I'd seen *Star Raiders* and had to have one. I still don't know what made her get her credit card out to buy one, because it was by far the most expensive thing she'd ever bought me. We were a poor family, my mum watched the pennies, so it was an act of extraordinary generosity, or perhaps a mother's intuition.

This is a story about my love affair with the ZX Spectrum of course, and that continues with a letter from [Nick Alexander]. The first few games I worked on were written for the Atari in BASIC. They weren't great. I sent them to Virgin, and Nick sent me a couple of form



The loading screen for *Chimera*.

letters in response, but finally, with my third game, he personally wrote on top of the form (typed) letter an advisory note, advising me to stick to a more mass-market platform like the Spectrum, because even at that stage, my graphics weren't cutting it on the Atari, and the Spectrum was likely to be more forgiving.

My first Spectrum effort was a word game called *My Word*, published by Papillon Software. It got a pretty good review (80%) in Personal Computer World (check). It was written on the Spectrum, but also on the Commodore 64. Both versions were actually written in BASIC, but I wrote the dictionary search in assembler. I wrote the assembler out by hand, converted it to machine code manually and entered it as data that was POKE'd into RAM. As for the dictionary (more a word list), yes, I entered that by hand too, every single word of the thousands upon thousands, on that rubber keyboard. The only concession to compression I made was



The distinct 3D graphics of *Chimera*.

to drop the first letter of every word and store the text as 26 string arrays, one for each letter of the alphabet. I'm pretty sure I set the 7th bit of the last character in each word to indicate end of word. The idea of a terminating NULL character to indicate end of string would have been considered extravagant in those days before 'C'.

It's fair to say that *My Word* was not exactly a commercial success, but it got me a Commodore 64 and a Spectrum. I used the former to make *Jet Set Willy* on the Commodore 64, on which much has been written already; and I used the latter to make *Chimera*. What happened in between these two projects almost finished my career before it had really got started.

What got me out of my slump and self-doubt was this little game called *Knight Lore*. It's hard to explain the shock I felt on seeing this landmark title running on a Spectrum. *Sabre* Wulf and *Underwurlde* had showed a company confident in its craft, creating polished games at relatively high prices and the introduction of Sabre Man to the world. *Knight Lore* took this charming little sprite and made him 3D. Frankly, it looked impossible and it was one of those rare moments in video games that made you doubt the evidence of your eyes. Sabre Man had come to life. Ultimate Play the Game called it Filmation, and all I knew was that I had to find a way to emulate it.

So even though I was new to proper Z80 (a linear dictionary search doesn't exactly qualify me for the ranks of assembler high wizardry), I knew that it was about time I paid attention to Nick Alexander's advice. I did not yet have a Microdrive, but what I did have was an ambition to go all out - and a copy of HiSoft's brilliant little *DevPac* assembler. I wrote an isometric graphics editor, in assembler, but while writing this, I was frustrated by the loading times for *DevPac*.

Why was loading time an issue? Well, every time your Z80 code crashed, and it crashed a lot when you were learning, especially in the days before hardware debugging, you had to reload your tools from cassette tape. This was slow. So I wrote my own turbo loader just to load *DevPac* faster so that I could reduce my debugging turn around times. Pushing cassette as hard as I could, I eventually had a set of graphics for what was to become *Chimera*.

I finally bought a Microdrive. I can't

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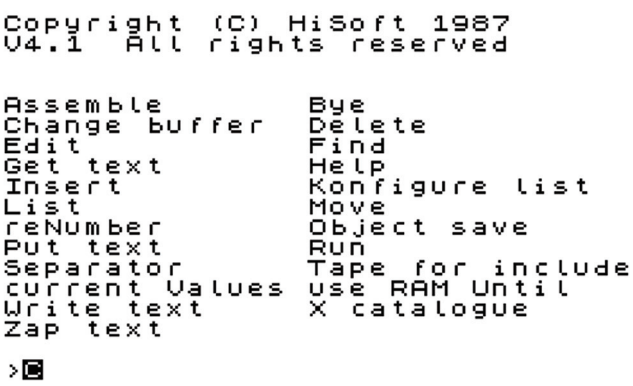
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HiSoft DevPac - editor/assembler.

quite remember how this happened, I wasn't exactly loaded at the time, but it made all the difference to the development of the game. I'd often play Format roulette to try and drive up the available space. Loading times were quicker, but the best thing was the pseudo random access of a bunch of different files. This sounds trivial today, but back in late 1984 and early 1985, this felt intoxicatingly liberating.

Although *Chimera* was my first proper Z80 project, I'd taught myself a lot before I started. I'd also absorbed some Z80 through studying Matthew Smith's listing for *Jet Set Willy* when I'd converted it to the C64.

My first attempts at recreating the Filmation experience were not too bad visually, but because I took the brute force route of drawing the entire screen for every frame, the frame rate was poor. I had to keep the screen size small to compensate. It wasn't bad code, but it was a bad algorithm. I was later to address this with the C64 and Amstrad versions, which only redrew the dirty screen areas every frame. It wasn't until almost 30 years later that somebody did the same thing (and then some) to the Atari version.

Finally, I had a passable demo, which I sent off to Firebird. I waited, pretty confident that I finally had a hit on my hands, the first "clone" of the Filmation look. So when I got rejected, I was stunned.

Colin Fuidge was right. The game was boring, despite its innovative looks. Not put off by this, I went back to the drawing board and added some puzzles, increased the size of the game from the original 40 rooms to 64 and added the sampled speech and scream that became the calling card of the game for decades to come. When I went back two weeks later with David Eastman (author of *Conflict* and *Floor 13*) who had helped me brainstorm some new ideas, this time, Colin was happy with what he saw, his smile meant I had a deal.

I was elated. The next time I would feel this good about my work would be 2005, 20 years later, when I was offered a job at PlayStation.

Chimera was essentially a tech demo (coloured, static bars in the border, isometric 3D graphics, sampled speech) with a smidgeon of gameplay, a bit of atmosphere and it came out at a good price.

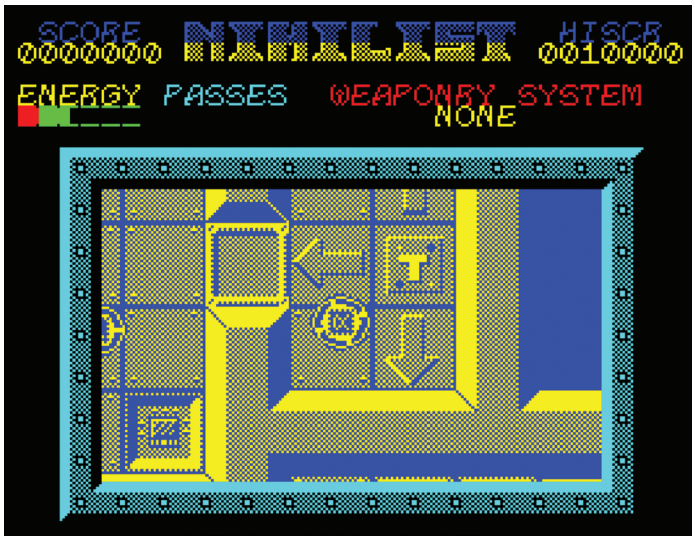
It eventually came out on the ZX Spectrum, Commodore 64, Amstrad

CPC, Atari 400, Watara SuperVision, Mac and PC in its original form, but it all started with the gauntlet thrown down by *Knight Lore* on the ZX Spectrum.

I did reasonably well out of *Chimera*, getting into 5 figures for the first time in my career, and it became the platform for a mutually successful relationship with Telecomsoft. The critical response to *Chimera* was fair. For a short period of time in the 1980s, I was highly productive and sought after. I regret not using the time and opportunity better.

My next meaningful exposure to Z80 and Spectrum code were when I received the source code to *Nightshade* by Ultimate after I'd done *Chimera*. Firebird had the licence to convert to the C64, and so they turned to me. Things had gone full circle. In a lovely twist, towards the end of my work on the C64 conversion of *Nightshade*, Ultimate asked me to convert *Knight Lore* and *Alien 8* to the C64, but this didn't pan out. My Z80 improved studying Chris Stamper's code. The man is a legend.

My final Spectrum game was *Nihilist*. Many people thought that a game with decent scrolling and some parallax was impossible on the Spectrum, but *Nihilist* showed that it wasn't, even if the design borrowed heavily from *Paradroid*. The reviews were spot on. It was a stunning technical achievement on a Spectrum, but the game design was poor and forgettable. Development of *Nihilist* was a lot easier than development of *Chimera*, because by this time, I was using the excellent Apricot based PDS, which meant that the game could be built and tested in seconds.



Nihilist - the intitial level on Shahid's follow up game to *Chimera*.

Getting *Nihilist* signed was pretty easy. My agent set up a meeting with Rod Cousins who signed the game for £5000 in about 30 seconds. In your early 20s in the '80s, that felt like a lot of money for a month's work.

My regrets around the Spectrum are that I didn't start on it sooner and I focused too much on technology and not on gameplay. I loved the creative energy in the Spectrum scene, because it was uniquely British. The other machines had a much more international influence from developers, but the Spectrum was very much a British thing.

Some of the greatest game programming talents in history came from the early Spectrum era from Britain. I'm proud to have been involved and still look up to some of those greats, particularly the Stampers and Matthew Smith.



Brian Beuken

Yie Ar Kung-Fu was a huge arcade conversion title for Imagine Software on the ZX Spectrum and was developed by Brian.

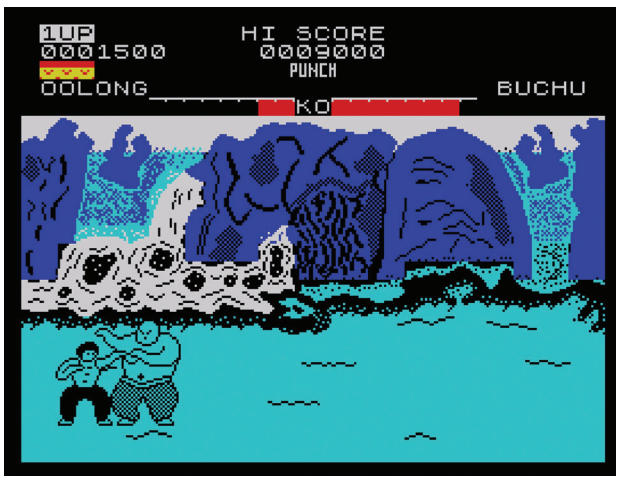
I have to be honest at this point and admit a certain degree of heresy; I was never an especially big fan of the Spectrum!

Despite writing a fair number of projects on it, my favourite machine for gaming was the Amstrad CPC.

But I did very much enjoy coding on the Spectrum, so perhaps I can be forgiven a little bit for not using mine as a real games machine.

I was never in the superstar league of coders like many of the people I worked with, also had zero imagination when it came to game design. I enjoyed the act of coding more than design, so most of the work I did on 8-bit machines was contract work where a client would ask me to work on their design or port from an existing system. This is how I basically ended up working on Spectrums in tandem with CPC's., since they shared a CPU a lot of code was sharable and I had no real problem plugging in new graphic routines.

Although I had owned a ZX81 and a Spectrum previously, my first attempts at coding were on a Texas TI99/4A, which some will remember as a beast of a machine with almost no software, so I tried to write my own with some success within the TI community before trading up to an Amstrad CPC which I found a lot easier to code.



Yie Ar Kung-Fu, Buchu - the first fighter on the standard 48K Spectrum version.

My first real exposure to Spectrum coding was when I ran a small company in Scotland called Timeslip Software It was basically just me and a friend trying to sell CPC games and not really understanding the market so we put ourselves

out to tender as coders and managed to snag a brilliant project with publishing gods Ocean, *Yie Ar Kung-Fu*!

Ocean asked us to do three versions, the Amstrad, Spectrum and C64 versions. We hired some local coders to help us and got started. My role at the time was mainly production and management, but due to time pressures I had to help out with the coding.

That got me started on Z80 coding: I wrote compression routines and sprite handlers for both machines which allowed us to get a lot more content into the Amstrad and 48K Spectrum. The C64 version sadly didn't make it and Ocean took it over and gave it to the great Dave Collier who did a brilliant job.

That small bit of coding brought me to Ocean's attention and I was offered the chance to come to Manchester and work on a new version of *Yie Ar King-Fu* for the soon to be released Spectrum 128K.

It was intended to be bundled with the 128K machine on launch but during development Sinclair was sold to Alan Sugar's Amstrad so it was put into different bundles as the launch was delayed for a rebrand.

My introduction to big city life in Manchester brought me into contact with some true greats of the industry, Dave Collier mentioned before, but also Paul Owens, Joffa Smith, Mike Webb etc, who were all incredibly helpful in showing me how to get the best out of Z80 and laid foundations for my future career.



Edd the Duck, Zeppelin Games' tie in to the CBBC puppet.

After leaving Ocean I stayed in the Manchester area and carved out a solid career as a dependable Z80 coder working at Icon Design for a couple of years before turning freelance for 12 years or so, turning out four or five games a year and eventually moving into console coding specialising in the Game Boy, which had a close approximation of a Z80 in it.



Sharkey's Moll, *Operation Wolf* clone published in 1991 by Zeppelin Games.



Yie Ar Kung-Fu - Club by name club by nature.

Although I preferred the colours of the CPC, it was a bitch to scroll or keep the speed up, so I was always happier doing scrolling fast games on the Spectrum.

The Spectrum's colour limitations are well documented but when the games were well worked out, the smaller screen size and simplicity of graphics meant you could put a lot more code into the machine and get smooth scrolls.

I started to love it later on in its lifespan when I managed to find the funds to buy the PDS dev system. This really opened up whole new coding opportunities and made testing and debugging so much easier.

One of my last ever Spectrum games was also far and away the best thing I ever did, and sadly it was never released. *Apprentice* was a Rainbow Arts Amiga game, which Probe contracted me to port… it was a wonderfully complex platform game with great gameplay, but sadly the Spectrum's time had come to an end and Rainbow Arts decided to focus on the Amiga version so it was canned just as it was finished. I really wish I still had a copy of that, it made people look twice when they saw it.

In spite of my heresy, I did write quite a lot of cool games on the Spectrum: it was a simple and easy machine to code, the size of the market pretty much ensured there was always a demand for games so I have a lot to thank Uncle Clive for, one or two mortgages got paid thanks to his little baby.

SPECTRUM MACHINE LANGUAGE FOR THE ABSOLUTE BEGINNER



Edited by William Tang



John Mullins

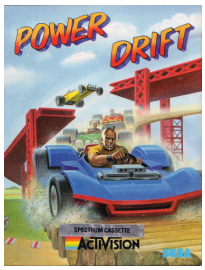
Whilst working at Sentient Software, John had the pleasure of converting Epyx's *Games - Winter Edition* for US Gold, though dealt with Ocean during its conversion, thus demonstrating the close ties with both companies at the time.

I picked the Spectrum as I guess it was the one that was available. I worked in retail and didn't really know enough about the stuff I was selling so took a Spectrum home to learn more. Before I knew what was happening I'd been out and bought Rodney Zaks 'Programming the Z80' and realised I had a bit of a natural knack for this programming lark. I did some bespoke software for a couple of people and thought I could probably make a living doing this. It took a while but eventually I did earn enough to make a career out of it.

The first game I worked on wasn't actually on the Spectrum. I did a couple of text adventures on the Memotech MTX, then worked on Scrabble on the Atari ST. The first Spectrum game was a conversion of Epyx's *Winter Games* for US Gold, although we dealt with Ocean Software throughout the development.

We never had enough memory (or processor cycles!). Oh and attribute clash. Initially our tools were pretty rubbish too, we ended up writing our own debugger over two or three caffeine fuelled evenings. That did save us far more time in the long run, in those terms. it was probably the best dozen or so hours coding I ever did. We also put the listing for that in Your Computer and offered to send anybody a version on tape for the princely sum of £3.50. I remember being unable to open our door some mornings for the stacks of envelopes with cheques for £3.50 in. In the end I had to go to a tape duplication house to get them made up, there was no way I could just run them off myself.

It was a great system to hone your trade on. You had





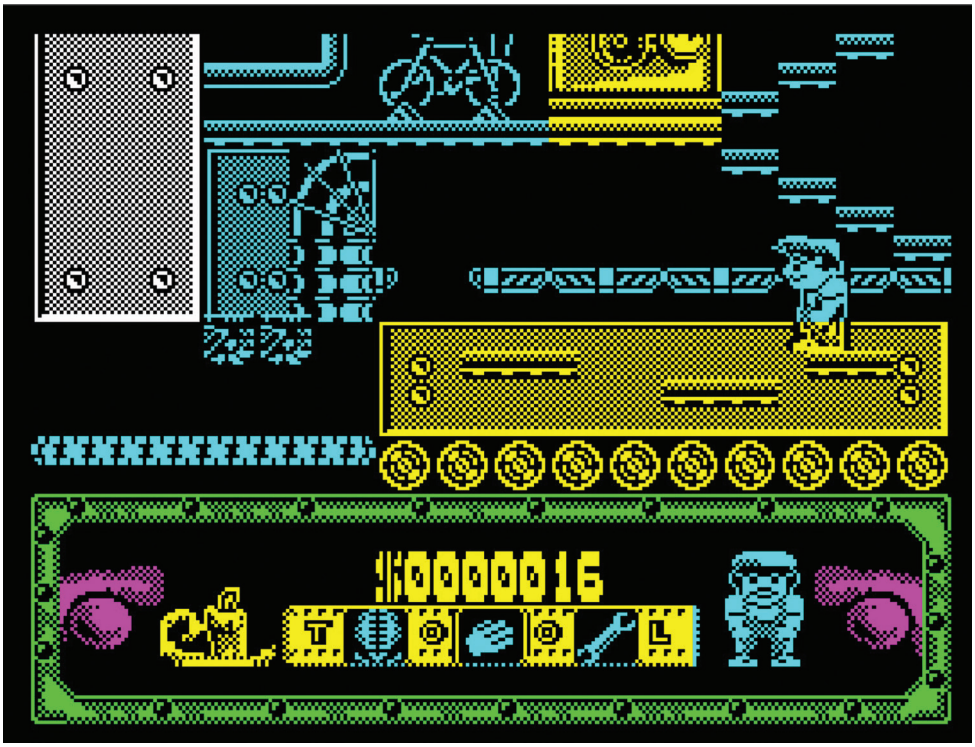
Power Drift, published by Activision in 1989.

to do everything yourself, there was no fancy hardware to help you out. It presented us with lots of challenges in order to implement some of the things we wanted to do. Solving those challenges was fun. I always enjoyed coding on the Spectrum, I can't say the same of many of the systems that came later.

Nightshift was an Attention to Detail game and I was hired to do the Spectrum, Amstrad CPC and C64 versions. Nick Rooke did the graphics and Dave Lowe (Uncle Art) did the sound. I remember on the C64 I had to recode some of Dave's driver because it just took too long. It was the last time I worked on the Spectrum (and the other 2 for that matter), it was at the time of the Gulf War. I used to be up in the early hours of the morning, watching the coverage of the war, racking up enormous telephone bills sending demos across the pond to LucasArts on a 2400 baud modem. And people still ask me why I gave up games!



The figure skating event from *Games - The Winter Edition*.



Screen from *Night Shift* published by US Gold in 1991.



Alan Grier

A fan of the ZX Spectrum as soon as it launched in the UK, Alan produced the graphics for many recognisable hits on the 8-bit computer.

I got my first Spectrum pretty soon after its release back in 1982, I still own it, and always will. I saved and saved and saved every penny I could and bought it myself from the local branch of John Menzies, waiting for Santa to sort me out wasn't an option. It hasn't been powered up for around 25 years now, so whether it still functions or not remains a mystery. One day they will pry it from my cold dead hands but until then it will remain a much cherished possession.

I've always been able to draw - art was the only class I would run to in school. It wasn't until I bought a copy of 'Melbourne Draw' that my career started in earnest. I would spend hours, days and weeks on it, discovering every feature and learning it inside out.

I then started drawing screens for my own pleasure, inspired by whatever I was into at the time, 'Judge Dredd', 'Metallica', I wasn't particularly into their music but I loved the cover of their 'Hell on Earth' album. 'The Terminator' simply because I had the original cinema poster on my bedroom wall. I wish I still had it as it's worth a mint these days - I probably swapped it for a Spectrum game and a Texan bar.



Turbo OutRun : The follow up to the popular arcade hit *Out Run*.

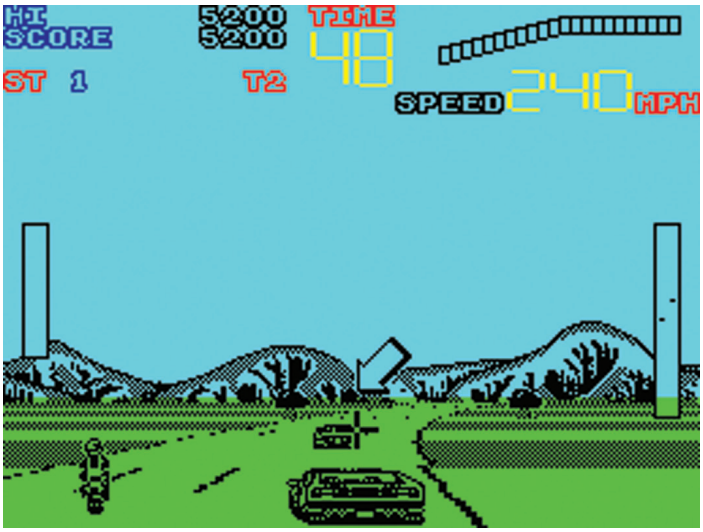
I had a, shall we say, 'interesting' technique when starting a screen; because we didn't have the luxury of drawing in layers back then, to get the basic outlines and composition I would draw on a sheet of clear acetate and tape it to my TV screen to use it as a guide (hey, it worked).

I was particularly

proud of my Freddy Krueger screen and sent it into a magazine competition, probably 'Crash' but I can't be sure. Anyway I won - the prize was a framed full colour A4 print and I was over the moon.

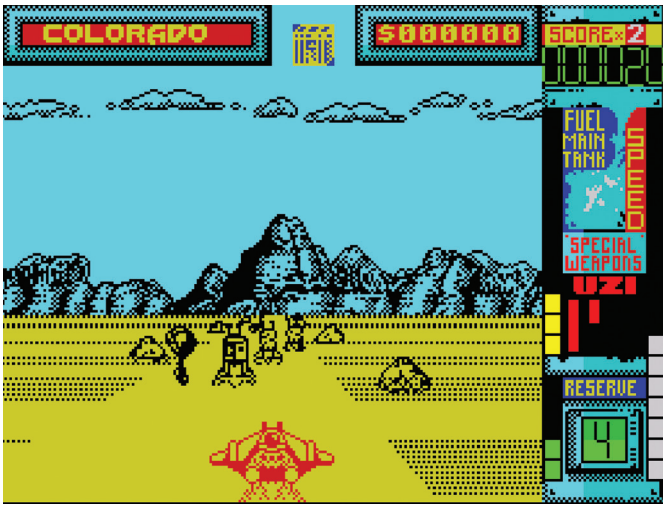
After that boost I started sending my screens around various software houses and the response was surprisingly positive. Melbourne House asked me to produce the loading screen for a game they were publishing called *Wiz* - they gave me a brief description of the game and left me to it. I sent them the completed screen and they absolutely loved it and paid me for the work. When the game was released my screen wasn't used - to say I was gutted was an understatement and I died a little that day.

If I had to choose a few of the games that gave me inspiration at the time, it would be anything by Ultimate of course, Mervyn Escort's *Deathchase*, *Manic Miner*, *Jet Set Willy*, *Trashman*,



Chase HQ 2 - Special Criminal Investgiation: The black and green graphical theme continues.

Scuba Dive, *Starquake*, *Nodes of Yesod*, *Chuckie Egg*, *Way of the Exploding Fist*, *Bear Bovver*, *Wheelie*, *Tir-na-nog*, *3D Starstrike*, Megadodo's *Pheenix*, *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*, *Eagle's Nest* and *Wild West Hero*, which was an excellent *Robotron 2048* clone by Silicon Kid. I was actually about to send off a postal order for WWH when I realised I would be passing the guy's house on an upcoming trip. I ended up knocking his door and buying it directly from him - he was a top bloke for not telling me to go away!



Hydra, published by Domark in 1991.

As far as graphical heroes go it would have to be Ultimate's Tim Stamper, any loading screen by F. David Thorpe, the Odin Computer Graphics games and anything from Gargoyle Games. It wasn't until my post Spectrum days that I



Cisco Heat: A modest hit late in the Spectrum's life in '91.

actually even met other artists in the flesh and the one that impressed me most was a guy I met while working at Probe, the awesome Nick Bruty whose art was out of this world and a nicer bloke you could ever meet.

I was responsible for the graphics on *Turbo OutRun*, *Chase HQ2*, *Hydra* and *Cisco Heat* for the Spectrum, Atari ST and Amiga computers. If memory serves me right, I believe I used *Degas Elite* on the ST for everything at this time - even the Spectrum graphics. As long as I adhered to the correct palette rules the coders could parse the screens from the ST directly over to the Spectrum.

I also produced graphics for an unreleased strategy board game for Accolade called *Stratego* and a space based sci-fi racer called *Eclipse* that we had developed ourselves with the intention of presenting it to US Gold for their appraisal. The graphics were complete but unfortunately ICE disbanded before it was coded up.

My Spectrum days were spent at ICE software in Glasgow working with Ian Morrison. Before I met Ian he had previously produced *Beach Head 2*, *Raid Over Moscow* and *Enduro Racer* on the Spectrum with his company Platinum Productions.

I was always happy how the games I worked on turned out and loved every second of it. It did get a little grating going from driving game to driving game but it was all fun nonetheless. I was always happy with what I produced at the time. Looking back with 20-20 vision though I can only apologise for the size of the *Turbo OutRun* Ferrari, it's bloody huge and obscures most of the road - for that I'm truly sorry.

I checked out magazine reviews back in the day, scouring the shelves for the latest issue of 'Crash'. I think I remember the reviews being above average but that may just be in my own head.

I absolutely loved my time on the Spectrum, I look back on it fondly and I'm proud to have been involved in a small part of its history through the games I worked on. Happy, happy days.



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THE BEST SOFTWARE GUIDE SPECTRUM GAMES



TONY TAKOUSHI



Stuart Middleton

The first game that Stuart worked on, with Nigel Alderton at Elite Systems, was the seminal *Commando* - a pretty impressive first Spectrum title.

I think I was born at the right time to work in the games industry. I was a kid when the Atari 2600 arrived at my house one Christmas morning, and I was a teen, just starting computer studies at school, when Santa brought me a ZX81. By the time the ZX Spectrum was released (no Santa this time), I was well on my way to being a computer nerd.

I had all the usual 'must have' games and played them all to death, but the only programming I did was in BASIC, and I knew 'real' games used this other language called machine code. Since no one had bothered to invent the internet yet, and the school curriculum didn't cover what I needed, my options were limited. One of the magazines I regularly bought had a tape on the cover with an introduction to machine code and some examples. I remember reading it and everything just falling into place. It only took a few months before I was boring everyone with my new machine code demo games and telling everyone how I was going to write some amazing game or other to rival *Atic Atac* or *Jetpac*. It took a good few months before I realised that to write a full commercial game you need things other than programming. Like design, art and an idea!

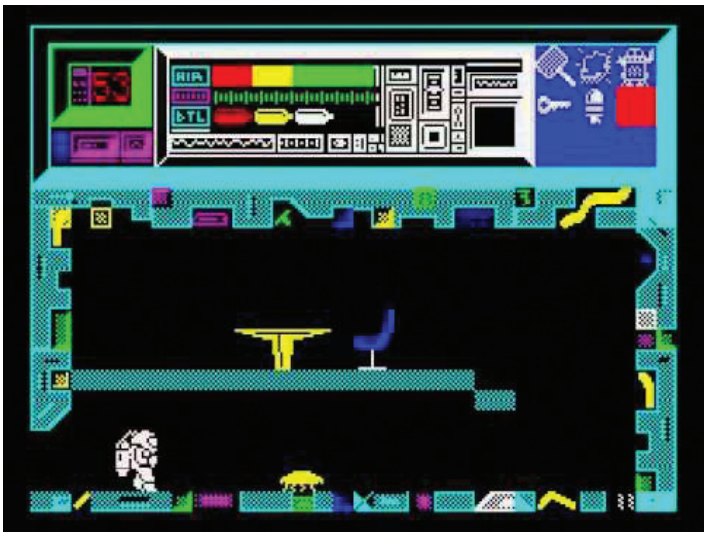


Commando: What a classic title to be the first game you worked on!

I made lots of little games over the next year or so with friends helping out with graphics and design. But with school and a strange new phenomenon in my life called 'girls', I never had the time to finish them. Before I knew it I was 16

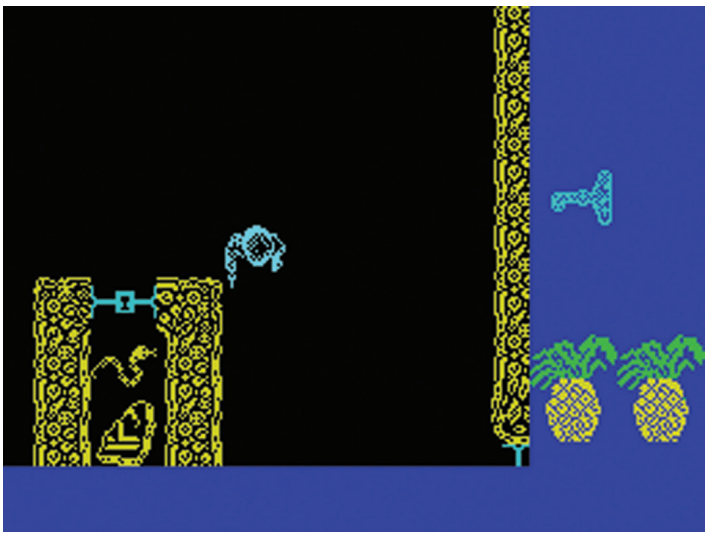
and had to choose a job or college. I chose neither, and decided I would become a rich and famous game developer working from home. Besides, a job meant wearing smart clothes and uncomfortable trousers. And I've always hated trousers. Unfortunately the government had a different idea and I ended up as an electronics engineer on a YTS (Youth Training Scheme), fixing TVs. Luckily this was short-lived and before long I landed an interview at Elite Systems. The hour long interview turned into a day's trial, which turned into a week's trial, which turned into a full time job.

The first thing I worked on was the classic *Commando* alongside Nigel Alderton. He was my mentor and became a good friend. Everyone who worked there was enthusiastic and shared my passion for games. There were two camps inside Elite. The Spectrum camp and the C64 camp. Looking back on it, the C64 felt like an alien device that was weird and awkward to work with, while the Spectrum was a friendly, easy to get along with



Universal Hero: The game Stuart feels was the one that began it all for him!

device. Given the vast array of devices we programmers happily flit between these days it does seem odd, but there was a definite barrier between the two machines that a lot of programmers I know felt. I joined pretty late in the development of *Commando* and it was released a matter of weeks later. The week after release my measly £50 a week pay packet had an extra £300 in it. The week after it had an extra £900! This was a very bad thing for a sixteen year old nerd to be given. I'm pretty sure I spent it all in the HiFi shop next door before I even got home! Elite was a great place to work and was a powerhouse for producing excellent Spectrum games. We wrote lots of great code and had fun along the way. Maybe a little too much fun at times.



How to be a Hero: released in 1987 by Mastertronic Added Dimension.

But as much as I loved it, I wanted to do my own thing. So it wasn't long before I was spending my evenings with friends designing a game of my own. With a little help from my neighbour Lee, his dad and a few other friends I had a game to call my own. All it needed was a few extra graphics (provided by the amazing Jon Harrison) and a name. After a little legal issue with its original name *Starman Jones* I settled on *Universal Hero*.

I felt as though *Universal Hero* for me was my first game. I'd worked on *Commando* and a number of other titles at Elite, but they'd always felt like a job. *Universal Hero* felt like fun. And the ZX Spectrum played such a huge role in that fun. The technical problems it posed were a delight to solve and it seemed at the time to present an endless supply of exciting new ideas. But like all good things, it must come to an end. The 16-bit computers started making an impression on the market and Nintendo and Sega weren't far behind. I moved on to writing PC games and then console games and my poor Spectrum was boxed up and left behind.

I wrote and was involved in many Spectrum games over the following years, before moving on to other platforms. Since then I've written games on almost every platform released, and a couple that weren't. I've worked on hundred million dollar projects and tiny indie games. I've had sales in the millions and one that didn't make it to one hundred copies. I've even written several Spectrum emulators for personal amusement. But those early days of development on my trusty old ZX Spectrum seemed somehow magical. I'm sure the memories are better than the reality, but I can't help thinking that this little computer from a UK eccentric was the main driving force behind the world-leading game community we have in the UK.

I've still got my original Spectrum named *Harriet*, and all the games on tape I wrote back then. I'm not a sentimental type, but I've never been able to bring myself to throw it away. Just knowing it's sitting at the bottom of a box somewhere in the garage is enough to remind me how it all started and how different my life would be if the little rubber-keyed brick had never existed.

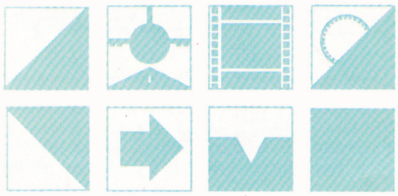


Tank Attack: Stuart's last game on the ZX Spectrum.

BUILDS UP MONTH BY MONTH INTO THE DEFINITIVE GAMESPLAYER'S GUIDE



THE A-Z OF SPECTRUM HINTS, TIPS AND POKES.



FREE WITH YOUR SINCLAIR



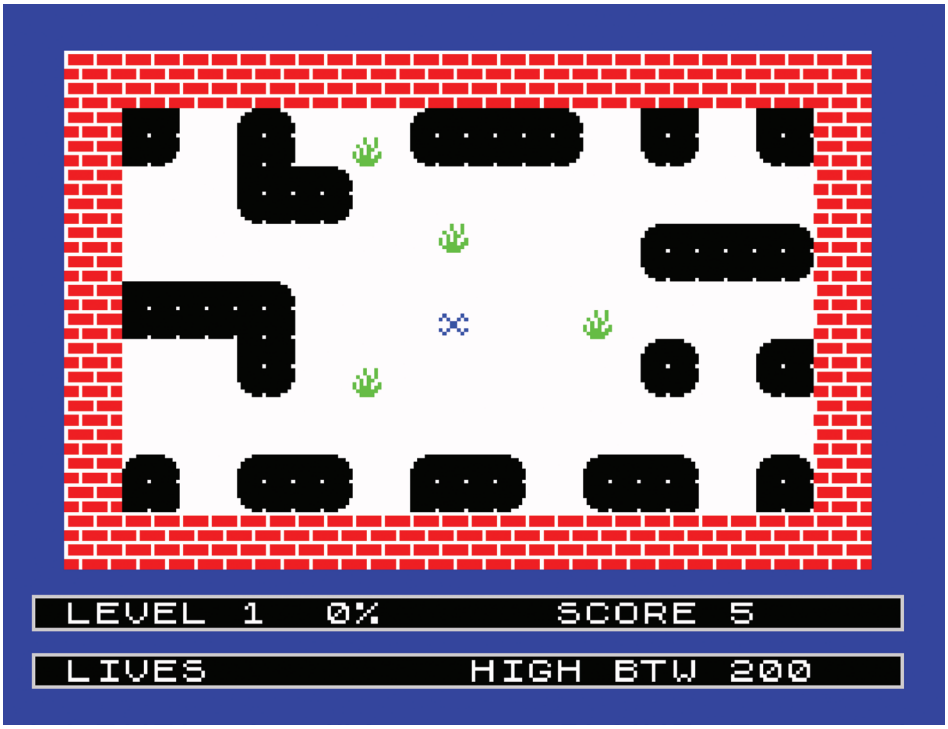


Ian Andrew

Ian first developed the iconic hit *Splat!* and around that game the legendary software house Incentive was born - a company that has a pedigree of titles to its name including the mighty Freescape games.

I have always been interested in making and playing games. When I was young I was building wooden pinball machines and submitting mazes to the magazines of the time. When I saw the ZX81 advertised in the Daily Mail for either £69.95 or £89.95 I think, I got it straight away - I was 22 at the time. It promised a BASIC language so easy anyone could learn it and I remember making some games on it, running out of memory then buying the 16K extension pack. It wobbled, made worse by the fact I was programming on my bed!

Then the Spectrum came out - I built my first game *Mined-Out*, now widely credited with being the forerunner to *Minesweeper*. The company Quicksilva at the time were advertising for games so I submitted it to them. I didn't hold out



Splat!, published by Ian's new company Incentive Software in 1983.

much hope as the games that they had already published were all in machine code and mine was in BASIC with a couple of techniques for stopping people jumping out of the game and into the code.

Quicksilva were great publishers - they put out the game quickly and I got paid good royalties which were paid on time (I heard stories of young programmers being exploited and paid very little at the time). I made a lot of revenue for a then 23 year-old for writing a game which was fun! So much so that I decided to sell my mail order business and concentrate on being a games publisher - how hard could it be!

My first game was *Splat!* (reviewed in Volume 2). I called my company Incentive Software as the plan was to have an extra 'incentive' for people to buy the game. In *Splat!* the incentive was a £500 high score prize and was won by a very happy James Tant who came to our offices to prove his talent and even exceeded the submitted score! I designed the game and wrote the logic. I worked with Ian Morgan who wrote the machine code that moved the map at a sensible speed.

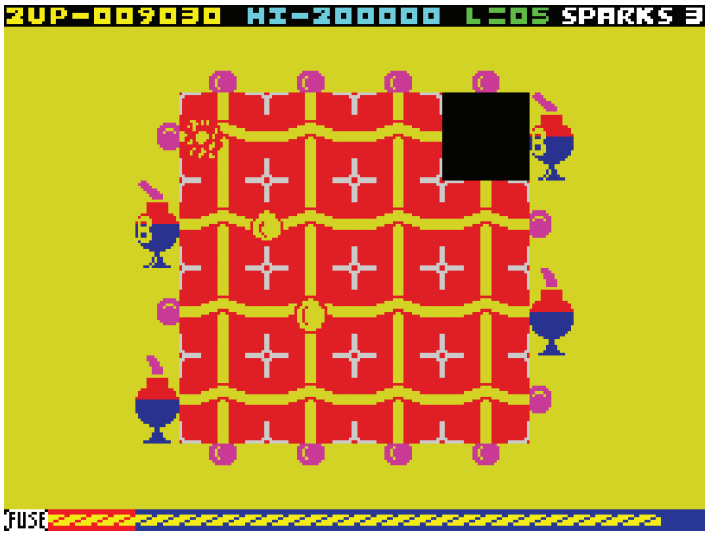


Mined-Out: Ian's first published game on the Spectrum written in BASIC.

The masters for production were on C15 cassette tapes from WH Smith which took ages to create and test. I remember being all ready to go to production when my mother (My number one play-tester) spotted that the speech in the game (one word!) was spelt wrong when it displayed itself on the screen. It said YIPEE when of course it should be YIPPEE! We had to re-master all over again. The first reviews were amazing - the feeling of elation was considerable and I felt like a pop star with thousands of admiring fans. The game sold well and got into the major distribution channels and charts. We promoted the game with opposite quarter page adverts



Driller, the first of the Freescape games.



Confuzion, written by Ian, Brendan Kelly and Paul Shirley in 1985 and released through Incentive.

making the word SPLAT. Also we made some beer mats which we called 'Splat Mats' - I still use one today but to be fair it's a little tatty now!

After *Splat!* I stopped writing and designing for a while, as I began publishing other people's games. *The Mountains of Ket* was game number two, a text adventure by Richard McCormack which turned out to be the first of a trilogy. The 'Incentive' for this series of games was a Video Cassette machine to the first gamer to complete all three games.

Another notable game we published was *Moon Cresta* - we obtained the official licence from Nichibutsu for £1000. The rights included publishing the game on any home computer and a faithful version for the Spectrum was programmed by Philip Taglione.

I then got back into designing with the Freescape series of games. Looking back I think I was the first to add 'scape' to the ends of words to make new words - maybe I'm wrong! *Driller* was the first 'Solid 3D' real time game. I asked my brother Chris to join the company to build the Freescape engine as he was the only programmer who said it could be done. In those days a game typically took up to six months to develop, so spending over a year on developing the Freescape engine was a bit of a risk. A risk well worth taking as it turned out.

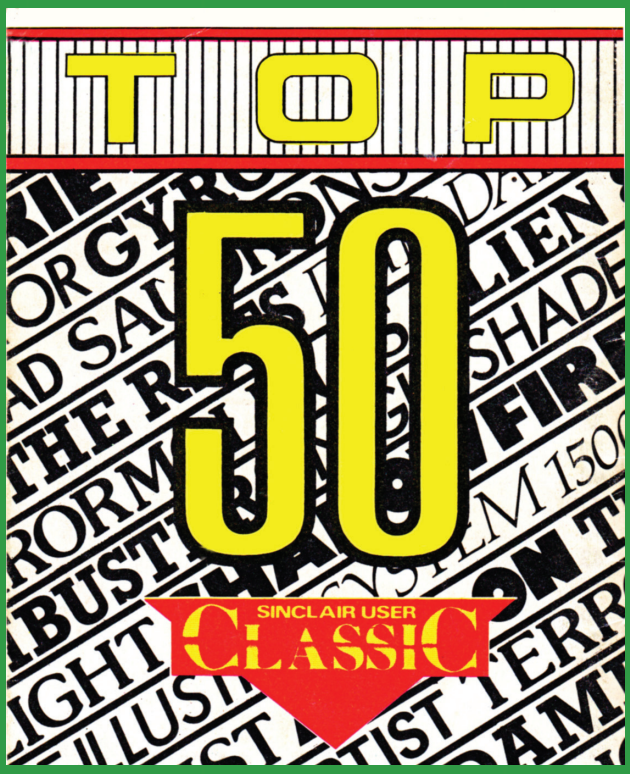
Our target was to get a screen update at least once a second. Chris built in a hex text editor so I could assign attributes to the elements and objects in the game myself. Those were the days!

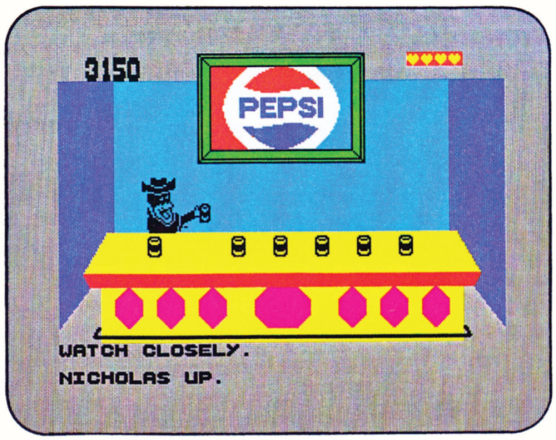
The 3D engine Freescape was used in many games and ultimately in the 3D Construction Kit. Where you could make your own 3D environments - even games. The company went on to develop Superscape - a 16 and 32-bit version of Freescape for PCs which thereafter grew, diversified and went public in 1994 to a full London IPO listing.

I shall always love games and games design.



Castle Master - this game and its sequel were the last Freescape games on the Spectrum.

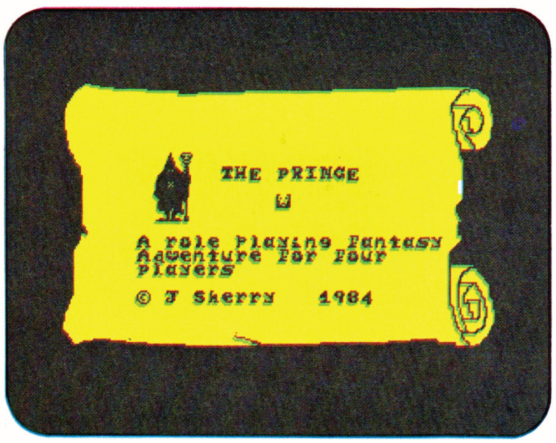




TAPPER
US Gold

This sweetly unpretentious arcade game from the US earns its place for sheer infectious fun. You're the help at the Soda Fountain, and you've got to keep those foaming mugs of fizz flowing. As the bar fills up, so the tension mounts – one customer kept waiting too long, one empty thrown on the floor and you're fired.

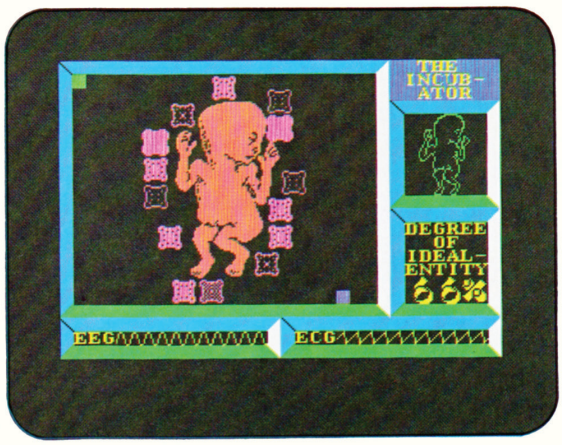
Stylish touches include a floorshow of dancers when you get a tip – customers turn to watch, giving you a breather. The graphics are hardly state-of-the-art, but somehow that doesn't seem to matter, the action's hilarious and infuriatingly addictive.



THE PRINCE
CCS

Multi-player computer games are frequently little more than glorified board games. **The Prince**, winner of the 1984 Cambridge Award, was the first to use the Spectrum's potential for hiding information from the human protagonists, creating a mood of mistrust and deceit.

All four players explore the gloomy and rambling castle seeking an audience with the shadowy Prince. Unreliable henchmen may be bribed to hinder or spy on your opponents, information and useful goods can be bought and sold, while off-screen devious alliances can be forged. Compulsive and evil entertainment, nothing quite like it has been released before or since.

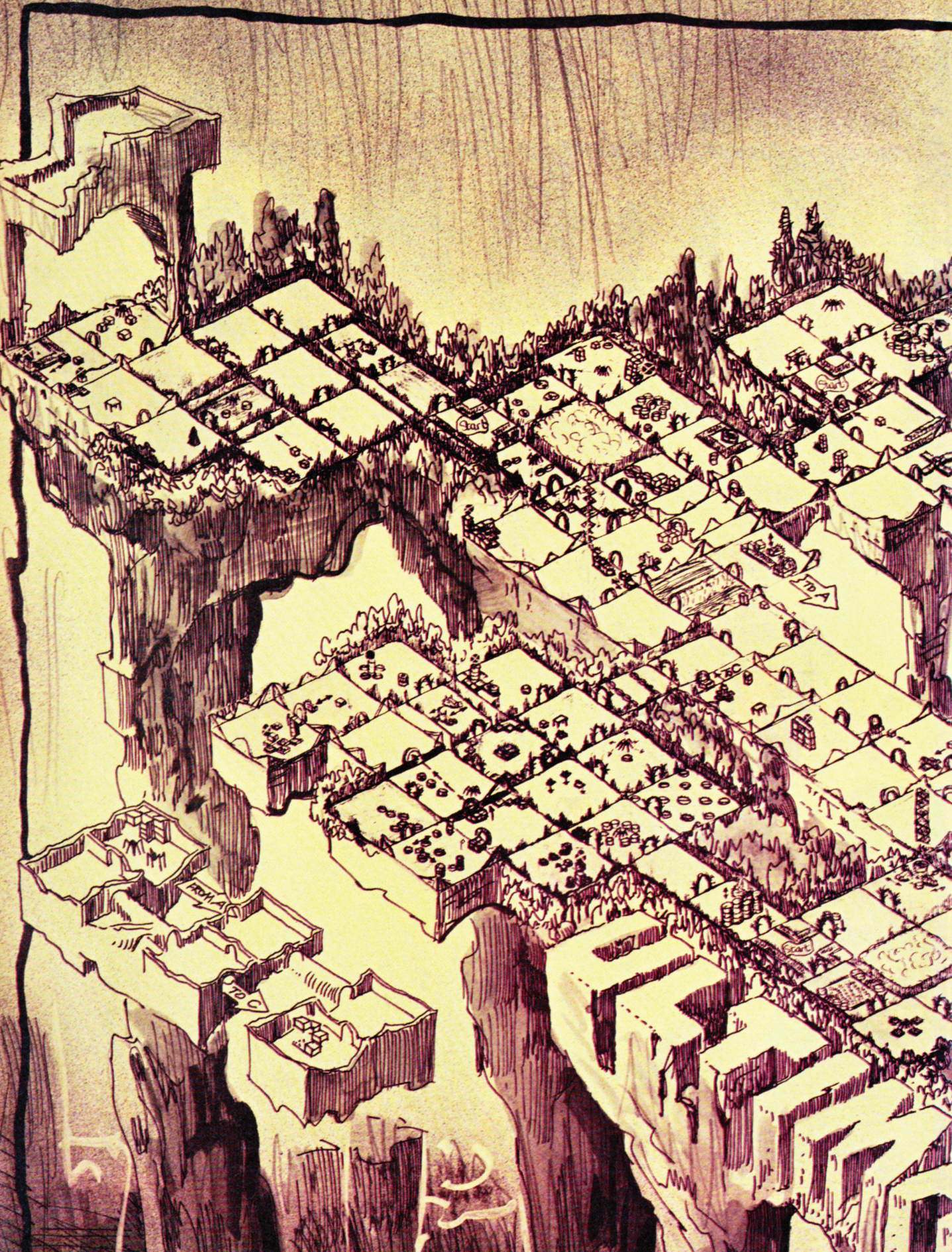


DEUS EX MACHINA
Automata

"The first original audio-visual entertainment since the computer revolution," is how author Mel Croucher describes **Deus ex Machina**. To others it is an unhappy, superficial, marriage of rock album, arcade game and simplistic philosophy.

The game follows the struggle for existence against a hostile and authoritarian future controlled by computer and defect police. A full soundtrack features the varied talents of Ian Dury, Jon Pertwee, E P Thompson, Frankie Howard and others.

Shunned by distributors and public, loved by the critics, Deus might one day come to be regarded as the software equivalent of the Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper*.


Start
Start
Start
TO A
FROM A
TO C

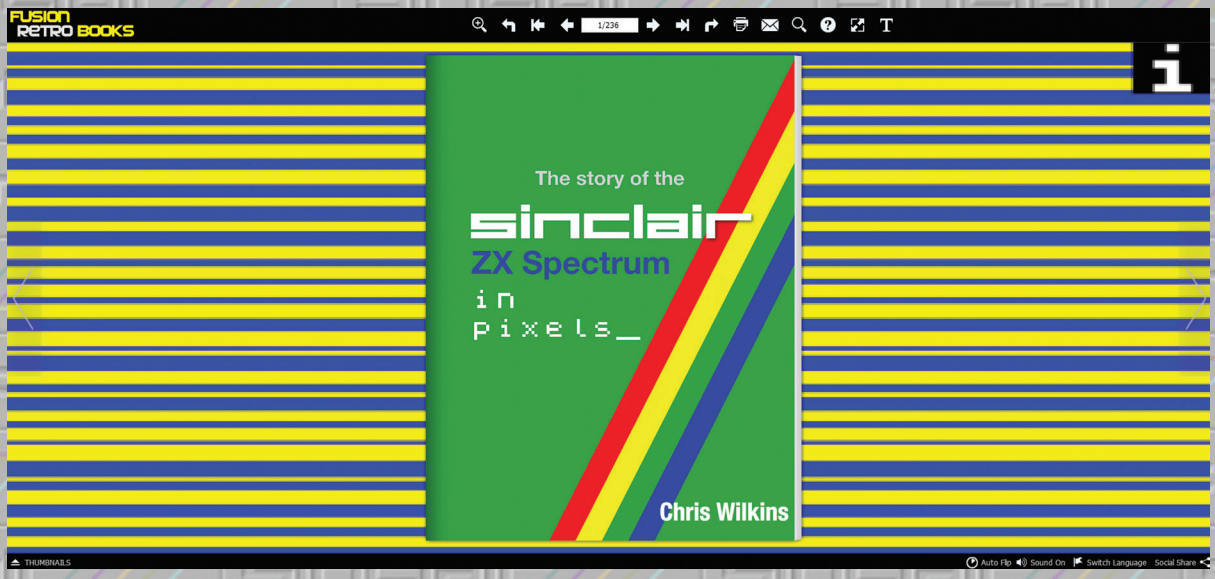
Pentagram

The Map



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In 1982 Sinclair Research Ltd, headed up by Clive Sinclair, launched the ZX Spectrum in the United Kingdom. This unassuming little 8-bit computer marked a turning point for the fortunes of the company and in turn sparked new hardware and software industries that made overnight celebrities of bedroom coders, such as Matthew Smith and Jonathan 'Joffa' Smith. The ZX Spectrum was a much loved phenomenon which continues to be celebrated to this day. This book takes the reader back to the dawn of the computer revolution, showcasing the games and hardware through imagery and personal narrative.

'It made a generation who can code' - MJ Hibbett



FUSIONRETROBOOKS